

INDIA SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION

Junior Sunday School Course

VILLAGE SERIES—YEAR TWO

Mrs. E. A. ANNETT



PUBLISHED BY THE
INDIA SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION, COONOR
NILGIRIS

1929

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BY

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PREFACE

THIS course of one hundred and four lessons is planned in view of the fact that there are in most of our village Sunday Schools children of Junior age, that is eight to twelve years old. These children are probably not able to take a normal Junior Course of lessons, yet their spiritual and moral nature demands something more than the lessons planned for Primary Scholars. Four years seems to be the average length of school life of most of these children, so that a two year Primary Course followed by this two years Junior Course would suffice in most village schools. In many cases, however, it is impossible to hold Sunday School every Sunday in the year, and the course can then be adapted by spreading it over three years, or by making selections of stories sufficient for the needs of two years.

Each book begins with a Christmas Lesson and lessons from the Gospels continue up to Easter. But some adjustment will be necessary here to accord with the changing date of Easter, and it may sometimes be possible to transfer one or two lessons from one year to the other to make them fit. The first book will be found to close with lessons leading up to Christmas, and last of all some of our Lord's parables are given as the climax and conclusion of the two year's teaching.

It will be noticed that in every lesson it is suggested that some verses be read in class. It is very desirable that the children learn to find their way about in the Bible and read it for themselves, but it is unlikely that they will all possess their own Bibles. They should be encouraged to do so as far as possible, and when they have them they should always be brought to school and used there. But in cases where

few, if any, have Bibles, one child each Sunday may be appointed to read the selected portions from the teacher's Bible. These should be practised beforehand with the teacher so that the reading may be well done. Never read the lesson passage straight through at the beginning of school—this is a sure means of killing interest in the lesson which follows—but only read the selected verses at the places indicated.

Aim of the Course

To help a boy or girl towards a fuller idea of the character of God, as expressed in ways of truth, justice and mercy.

2. To help them towards a true ideal of duty to God and man, expressed in love, honour, obedience, fair-play and self-control, through stories of heroes whose acts and motives bear some relation to the experience of a boy or girl.

3. To present the Life, Death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ :

(a) That a boy or girl may see in His Person and deeds the highest embodiment, not of power alone, but of truth, courage, justice, love and grace.

(b) That they may feel the supreme attraction of His Person and call, and desire to love and obey Him.

SYLLABUS

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Aim. *By a course of lessons extending from Christmas to Easter to emphasize the love and kindness of Jesus.*

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Aim. *To conclude the course by summing up the teaching given therein with some of our Lord's most striking parables.*

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LESSON 1

THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH

Luke ii. 1-38.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

It is a great mistake to take it for granted that the children know this story so well that it is not necessary to tell it again. In many cases the Christmas session of the Sunday School—if indeed there is a Christmas session at all—has been made an opportunity just for singing and reciting, and the class teaching omitted for so many years that some children have never heard this story told by their teachers. It is well to have plenty of carol singing, but to be sure that the children have really *seen* and *felt* the great story about which they sing. It is not enough to merely read the passage in school—"the children have a 'Divine right' to the beautiful old story at least once a year, and when teachers are telling the best-known parts they will do well not to strive for novelty but let the old impressions be lived through again, and bring their feelings of wonder and joy once more." And to tell this story well the teacher must prepare as thoroughly as for any other. Find Bethlehem on the map—situated in the richest pasture land in Judea. Make a list of the various people we connect with the town, and note how many of them were prosperous farmers. Find Nazareth, also, in Galilee, and trace the route from there—across the river, down the eastern side, across again to Jericho. Consider how long this journey of a hundred miles would take for poor people who had few conveniences of travel. Note the reason for the journey, ii. 1-5—think how Mary must have welcomed the order as making possible the fulfilment of Micah v. 2. Apparently Joseph now planned to remain in Bethlehem and not take the long journey back again, Matt. ii. 22, 23. Consider how the shepherds found the Babe with so little information, ii. 12.

Swaddling clothes were the ordinary dress of a peasant baby in Palestine—strips of white cloth four or five inches wide and five or six yards long wound round like bandages. Study the Jewish laws regarding rites at childbirth, Lev. xii, and note that these were all fulfilled in this case. Note also how the offering made indicates the poverty of Joseph and Mary. It had come to be the habit in Jewish homes at that period to have the ceremony of naming and of circumcision performed on the same day. Consider all those who were at this time expecting the Messiah, chapters i and ii.

Aim of this Lesson

To help the children to feel the wonder of the Incarnation.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Let the children recall what the angel had said to Mary—how Mary was living in Nazareth and how she read in her Scriptures that the Messiah was to be born in Bethlehem, a hundred miles away.

Going to Bethlehem—Then one day came an order from the Government that the people of the land were all to be counted, and everybody had to go to their old family homes for this. Mary and Joseph both belonged to a family which had come from Bethlehem, so they would have to go to Bethlehem for this census. That must have proved to Mary still more that what the angel had said was true—her Baby was to be the Messiah everyone was looking for. Imagine their preparations for the journey, and think how they would travel. After nearly a week they came among the hills surrounding Bethlehem where many shepherds were feeding their sheep. Did Mary notice these shepherds at all do you think? The shepherds must have noticed how many travellers had been coming all day, and for many days perhaps, into Bethlehem. And perhaps they also noticed Mary and Joseph coming very late and very tired after other people had all got in.

The Crowded Inn—Picture Joseph and Mary entering the town—pushing through the crowded streets to the inn—

meeting the innkeeper. Tell what he said to them—they could hardly have been surprised at hearing this for all the courtyard was full of camels and asses, groups of people and piles of luggage. Do you think Joseph told Mary to sit in a quiet corner while he went out to see if he could get a lodging somewhere else in the town? But every place was full for so many travellers had been coming. So the innkeeper made room for them in the cave where he kept his cows. Describe their preparations for the night—sweeping—unpacking bundles—eating. Imagine the bustle and excitement of the day gradually dying down as night fell, till the town was wrapped in darkness and silence.

Night Outside Bethlehem—But outside on the hills where the sheep were there could be no such sound sleep. No doubt the shepherds slept by turns, but there were always enough awake to keep each other company and to guard the sheep. Tell how a fire would be lighted partly to frighten the wild beasts and partly for warmth, and round this fire the men would sit telling stories, now and again walking round the fold to see that all was safe. And on this particular night they probably never gave a thought to all those people they had seen during the day, now crowded into the town. Vividly describe the light which suddenly shone round them—the bright stranger standing by them—their fear (ii. 9). Read ii. 10–12, pausing after each verse to make sure that the children get the full meaning. Picture what followed (ii. 13), and let the children read all together, ii. 14. Then the angels left, the light went out, the shepherds found themselves alone round their fire.

The Wonderful Baby—Imagine their conversation then—had they dreamed? What did it mean? They wanted to see this wonderful Baby—read their decision, ii. 15. Picture them making the fold secure, building up the fire, hurrying toward Bethlehem. How were they to find the Child? Read again what they knew, ii. 12—but which manger? If He belonged to a Bethlehem family He would be in a house—perhaps He was born to some of those travellers? Think how they looked for Him—tell where they found Him. He was Mary's Baby who had been born that very night in the cave at the inn. Picture vividly

the scene in the stable—imagine how Mary would tell the name of her Baby and its meaning (Matt. i. 21), and how interested she and Joseph were in the shepherd's story. Tell what the shepherds did next (ii. 17). Cannot we do just like they did—tell this story to as many people as possible this Christmas-time?

In Jerusalem—Now the Jews had a law that every baby boy, when he was six weeks old, should be taken to the Temple in the big city of Jerusalem. This was only six miles away from Bethlehem where Jesus was born, so it was not a difficult journey. But think how carefully they prepared for such an important ceremony. Tell of the offerings which had to be made. Picture the journey to and arrival in Jerusalem and the family making their way along the steep, narrow streets till they came to the great Temple. Do the children remember what we heard a few weeks ago about the old man, Simeon? Vividly picture him as, with an exclamation of praise to God, he took the Baby in his arms. How did he know? It was partly God speaking in his heart, and then when he spoke to Mary about her Baby she doubtless told him about the angels who had come to herself and to the shepherds. Then he knew this was God's Messiah. Read his further words to Mary, ii. 34, 35, and tell of Anna who came in at that moment and heard what he said. Thus right at the beginning it was revealed to some that it was by a way of pain and sorrow for Himself that Jesus was to bring to the world the joy and peace the angels told about.

THE MESSIAH AT WORK

Aim

By selected incidents from the life of Jesus, to especially emphasize His bravery and courage. Extending from Christmas to Easter.

LESSON 2

EARLY DAYS

Luke ii. 39-52

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Very little direct information is given about our Lord's early life but various things are suggested in other passages. We read of His brothers and sisters, Matt. xiii. 55, 56. It was one of these, James, who afterwards wrote the Epistle bearing his name. It would be well to study this short letter and consider how many of its statements, especially in chapter iii, were remembrances of his elder Brother's life in Nazareth. Search out references in the Gospels to home details—making bread, use of the candlestick, mending garments, grinding, washing, etc. Jude, another brother in his short epistle, evinces a knowledge of the Apocrypha, from which we may infer that these books, as well as the Old Testament were well studied in the home at Nazareth. Of Joseph we never hear again after he took the Boy to Jerusalem at 12 years old and the probability is that he died early, leaving Mary a widow with a large family, of whom Jesus was the eldest. Consider the work of a village carpenter in an agricultural district.

Note the position of Nazareth—the sort of country by which it is surrounded—and recall the Old Testament stories specially connected with that district. These doubtless were the ones of paramount interest to the Boy Jesus. Note His three-fold development, ii. 40, 52; physical, mental, spiritual. He must have been an all-round Boy and was a general favourite. Jesus accompanied His parents to the Passover at Jerusalem for the first time when He was 12 years old because He was approaching His thirteenth year in which He would become by Jewish custom “a son of the law”, that is, He would assume responsibility for His own actions. Compare this with any ceremonies observed in India at that age.

Aim of this Lesson

To draw out the children's admiration for, and encourage their emulation of, the Perfect Boy.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Do the children remember the name of the town where Jesus was born? Where did His parents live before that? And when Jesus was still quite a little Boy they all went back there.

Home—Picture the home in which the Boy grew up—a flat-topped house with outside staircase and terrace roof—carpenter's shop adjoining—all small and poorly furnished, but neat and clean. A grape vine doubtless grew outside the house on the porch, and perhaps there was a fig tree also. Imagine Mary's work—let the children suggest details. Tell of the four brothers and the sisters who came to the home as the years went by, and think how helpful the eldest Son soon became amongst them. What sort of things would He learn to do first?

School—Like all other Jewish towns and villages Nazareth had a school for boys, but they did not learn all the things you learn at school. At five years old every Jewish boy began to learn his Bible—let the children show how much of our Bible this was—only the Old Testament. Some had to be

learnt to repeat from memory, and any day the boys might have been seen sitting in a circle on the floor of the school-room saying these passages over together. Let the children read Deut. vi. 1-9 which is one of the passages they used to learn. They heard stories, too, about the men of their nation who lived long ago—which of these do you think they liked best? Till ten years old the Bible was their only lesson book and every Jewish boy learnt to love it dearly. After ten other national stories and books were introduced, and later came the explanation of their religion. Think how proud the teacher was who had Jesus in his school—never had he known any boy learn so quickly or take such an interest in his lessons.

Temple—Once every year all these years Joseph and Mary went on a long journey to worship God in the great Temple at Jerusalem (ii. 41). They would be absent for nearly a month each time—think what the children would do in their absence, and what the parents would tell them about on their return. And Jesus and His brothers must have looked forward to the time when they would be old enough to go too. Tell how it was decided that at 12 years of age Jesus should accompany them. Imagine the Galilee people gathering together for the journey to Jerusalem. There would be other boys of the same age going up for the same ceremony, besides the grown-up people, many of whom, like Joseph and Mary, had never missed going for years. On a small map trace their route on the east of Jordan. If the children have ever been to a *mela* or similar gathering let them tell some incidents of the journey. Jerusalem at length came into view and all the pilgrims approached the city singing. Picture their entrance through the city gate and arrival at the Temple, and think especially of the excitement of the boys. Again let the children suggest from their own experience, things which may have happened during the week of the feast, but especially dwell upon what Jesus did. Think of His interest in the Temple—the worship—the religious teachers. So engrossed in these things was He that He lost count of time and did not realise when it was time to go home. He did not miss His parents for a whole day—two, three days. Imagine how He spent that time amongst the teachers asking

them questions about God and showing more interest in these things than any boy they had ever met. Probably one and another of them gave Him food and so the days slipped by. And then all at once Mary and Joseph appeared and surprised Him by what they told Him (ii. 43-46). "Why did you not look for Me here first of all?" He said in surprise. "Did you not know I should be in My Father's house?" But interested as He was He never thought of staying when they told Him to come but started back to Nazareth with them at once.

Workshop—Now give the children a description of what His life must have been in Nazareth henceforward. The eldest Son in a poor family He must have soon begun work in the shop with Joseph—suggest the different articles He would make. By this time there were several children in the family and before long the father died. Yet never was Mary's eldest Son disagreeable or resentful over their hard circumstances. In Nazareth itself He had always been a general favourite (ii. 52), and His brother's recollection of Him in after days was that He was perfect, never saying a wrong thing. At the end of the lesson, if possible, show the children the picture of Jesus with the teachers at Jerusalem.

LESSON 3

THE MESSIAH AND THE HERALD

Luke iii. 15-17, John i. 29-51.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

See on the map the probable spot where our Lord's baptism took place, and the wilderness, most likely the barren country between Jerusalem and the Jordan. Consider in the light of John i. 33 how much Jesus and John knew of each other, being cousins—was it personal knowledge that made John object to baptising Jesus, Matt. iii. 14? Jesus' answer admits that John's contention was right but He must take His place with the people.

John's Gospel leaves out all reference to the temptation, and this evidently took place after the baptism and before the events of our lesson passage. Apparently the vision and the voice were only seen and heard by Jesus and John, and it was when Jesus returned from his forty days in the wilderness that John testified what he had seen.

It was from among John's disciples that Jesus found His first followers—they were evidently earnest seekers after truth as were all who gathered round the baptist. "Note that the first disciples followed Jesus, as they had followed John, as *learners* only. Not till later did they understand the comprehensiveness of His call. Study the progressive aspects under which the new followers saw the Master—

"Peter and John as *Rabbi* (John i. 38); Peter as *Messias* (ver. 41); Philip as *fulfilment of prophecy* (ver. 45); Nathaniel as *Son of God, King of Israel* (ver. 49); while Jesus Himself took His special title as '*Son of Man*' (ver. 51)" (Huntley).

Aim of this Lesson

To stimulate a desire to follow Christ.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Let the children recall what they know about the work of John the Baptist, especially reminding them of the fact that he proclaimed himself the herald of Someone Who was coming after. Of course the children know that this was Jesus, and it was while John was preaching in this way that Jesus was working as a carpenter in Nazareth.

Going with the Crowds—Think how interested Jesus and His brothers were in hearing their cousin, John, so much talked about—they may never have seen him, but of course Mary had told them all about him. And then Jesus told them of His determination to join the crowds who were going to John. We do not know what they thought of this—whether they tried to dissuade Him—but probably people did not stay long so they expected Him soon to come back. May be a brother accompanied Him, and no doubt there were

others from Galilee going, so He did not travel alone. And all the way the conversation would be about this strange new preacher and his stern messages. Perhaps they also knew what he had said about being a forerunner and discussed as they walked who could be the One Who was coming. After a few days' walking and talking thus they came to the place where John was living and preaching—picture the scene. And then Jesus came to John and asked to be baptised as the rest were. Read their conversation, Matt. iii. 14, 15, and explain why each said what he did. Then picture John unwillingly baptising Jesus and describe vividly what John saw and heard. This then was what God thought of those years Jesus had spent in Nazareth—He was perfectly satisfied with all Jesus had done. What do you think God would say about our lives?

Going into the Wilderness—Immediately after that Jesus went away alone—instead of going back home He felt impelled to go right away into the wilderness. Do the children remember what happened there? Do not spend much time over this, but let them recall from a previous lesson a little about the temptation. And then after that terrible experience Jesus came back again to the river and the place where John was preaching and baptising. Read what John said as he saw Jesus approaching, John i. 29-34. So John knew for certain that Jesus was the Messiah, the One Who was to come after himself. And many people must have heard him say this—think how they would talk about it all the rest of that day.

Calling Disciples—"Will He be here tomorrow?" "Shall we see Him again?" were amongst the questions some of them were asking. And when the next day came and the crowds again gathered to hear John there was Jesus again amongst them, and again John said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" Tell how amongst the crowd who heard John say that were two young men, fishermen from Galilee not far from Jesus' own home. Describe vividly their first interview with Jesus (i. 38, 39). Jesus was probably staying in a sort of tent made of branches of trees, like many other people had put up by the river. And there they spent the night with Him. Picture Andrew, the next day, bringing his brother to Jesus

(i. 41, 42), and tell how Jesus Himself found Philip, another man from Bethsaida, and said, "Follow Me." Perhaps Andrew or John knew that Philip was wanting to see the Messiah and had told Jesus of him, and that was why He had looked for him. Then tell how Nathaniel was found and read his conversation with Jesus, i. 47-51. And now it was time for Jesus to go back north to Galilee, so He walked back in company with these five young men. Think how they enjoyed getting acquainted with Jesus during this walk, and imagine the excitement in the home at Nazareth when Jesus came back with His five new friends. We shall hear a great deal more about those five men who were Jesus' first disciples. Many more have followed Him since and now He wants us amongst His friends and disciples.

LESSON 4

IN NAZARETH

Luke iv. 16-30

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

The subject of our lesson to-day is related by Luke right at the beginning of our Lord's ministry, but the allusion to things done in Capernaum, iv. 23, suggests that it may have happened later. Compare with Matt. xiii. 53-58 and Mark vi. 1-6. Note in each the details which indicate that all describe the same incident, and those details which are different. But as it is clear from all three that Jesus was not yet well-known in Nazareth as a preacher we may take it that Luke is right in placing this visit to Nazareth early.

Compare iv. 18, 19 with Is. lxi. 1, 2, from which it is taken with the addition of a clause from Is. lviii. 6. Note His definite application of the words to Himself, iv. 21, and "the three main blessings He said He was ready to give: Love, Light and Liberty. The good news of the Love of God for the heavy-laden and poor—a new era for them;

Liberty for all bound by ceremonialism or by sin—especially for those bruised in spirit; Light for those who were heart-blind and could not see truth for themselves and find their way to joy and peace.” Consider the reason for the people’s anger: (1) His humble origin; (2) the fact that He had done miracles in Capernaum and not in Nazareth; (3) the suggestion that foreigners were as good as they, iv. 25–27. Note why He had done no miracle in Nazareth. No miracle is implied in His escape.

“Perhaps His silence, perhaps the calm nobleness of His bearing, perhaps the dauntless innocence of His gaze overawed them . . . And so He left them, never apparently to return again; never . . . to preach again in their little synagogue. Did any feelings of merely human regret weigh down His soul while He was wending His weary steps down the steep hill-slope towards Cana of Galilee? Did any tear start in His eyes unbidden as He stood, perhaps for the last time, to gaze from thence on the rich plain of Esdraelon, and the purple heights of Carmel, and the white sands that fringe the blue waters of the Mediterranean? Were there any from whom He grieved to be severed, in the green secluded valley where His manhood had laboured, and His childhood had played? Did He cast one longing, lingering glance at the humble home in which for so many years He had toiled as the village carpenter? Did no companion of His innocent boyhood, no friend of His sinless youth, accompany Him with awe, and pity, and regret? Such questions are not, surely unnatural; not, surely, irreverent; but they are not answered. Of all merely human emotions of His heart, except so far as they directly affect His mission upon earth, the Gospels are silent. We know only that henceforth other friends awaited Him away from boorish Nazareth, among the gentle and noble-hearted fishermen of Bethsaida; and that henceforth His home, so far as He had a home, was in the little city of Capernaum, beside the sunlit waters of the Galilean Lake” (Farrar).

Aim of this Lesson

To show the courage of Jesus.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers the name of the place where Jesus lived while He was a Boy and young Man?

Nazareth—(On a map point out Nazareth and describe its situation. It lies in a saucer in the hills which shut it in on the north, east and west, but to the south it looks over the great plain of Jezreel or Esdraelon. A very short walk brings one to the summit of the hills behind the town and from there can be seen the sea on the west and the valley of the Jordan on the east. Can the children remember any of the stories Jesus would think of as He looked down on these places?

Re-Visiting Nazareth—It was to this place that Jesus came back, as we heard last week, with His five new followers. Some people must have been surprised to find that He did not go back to work in the carpenter's shop, but instead He spent much time talking to people about God and His Kingdom. Everyone must have begun to see that Jesus was beginning to be a preacher.

Preaching in Nazareth—Tell how the Sabbath day came, the day on which the people in that land went to church (synagogue). And of course Jesus went with the others as He always had done. Picture vividly the gathering company, the opening of the worship, the leader asking Jesus to read. Describe the book that was given to Him—not like ours, but a strip of parchment rolled on a stick. Let the children turn to the place Jesus turned to and read what He read, Is. lxi. 1, 2. Describe what He did then and how all the people looked at Him (iv. 20). When anyone read such a short passage as that people knew it was because he was going to preach to them, so they waited eagerly for Jesus to begin. Read iv. 21, and explain that He meant that He was the wonderful Deliverer their prophet had written about. Tell the rude murmur that began to go round the church (iv. 22). Let older classes read iv. 23-27—to younger classes merely give the meaning of it.

Turned out of Nazareth—Vividly describe the unreasonable anger of the other worshippers and picture their furious action (iv. 28, 29). See that the children realize what grave

danger Jesus was in. Would He beg for mercy?—or resist and fight them? He did neither but let them take Him out to the precipice. He was not a bit frightened but just waited His chance and then calmly walked away and left them. How sad He must have been that the people who knew Him so well should treat Him like that! But it must have been a comfort to know that He had these new friends who had joined Him by the river. What a splendid Captain for us also to follow!

LESSON 5

THE DISCIPLES' CALL

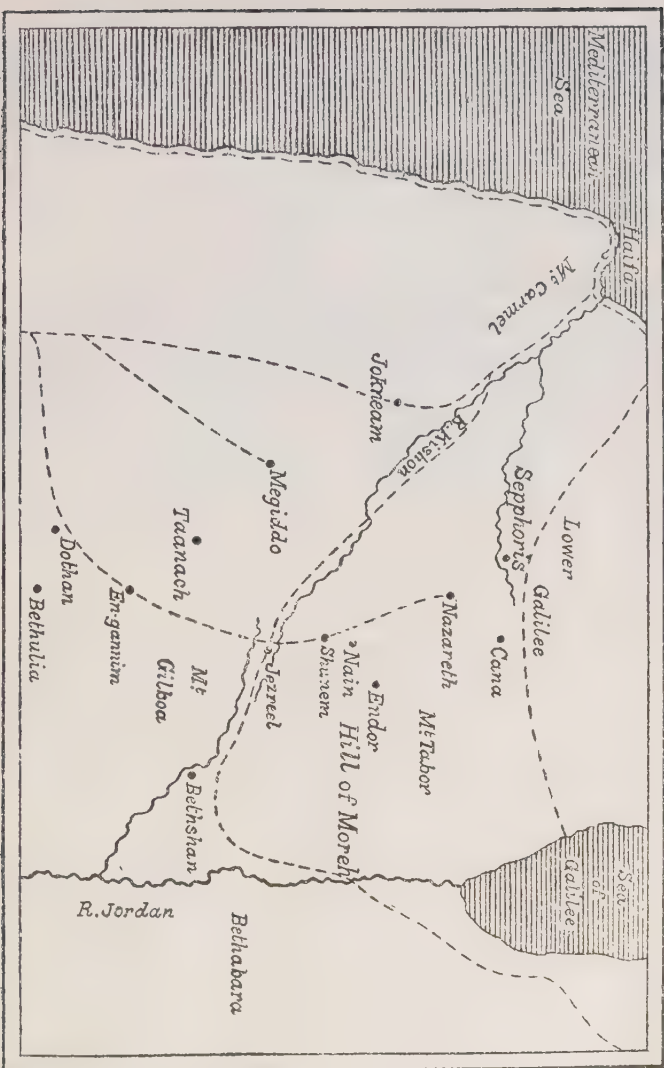
Luke v. 1-11

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“Study the different calls of the disciples. Remember that every Rabbi had his ‘learners’, who might follow him for a period, and afterwards return to their work, calling themselves by his name. John i gives the first introduction of Jesus to five disciples. Mark i and Matt. iv. 12, etc., tell of the second and more definite call at the beginning of the Capernaum ministry; while Luke v gives a third call, with its parable of the great draught of fishes. Note that those called had not yet received any definite ordination to service. . .

“The scene in Luke v is an early morning one. Christ is on the shore to greet the weary and disappointed fishermen. Simon acknowledges His right to command, even though he feels some doubt as to the wisdom of the proceeding. The evidence of a power entirely beyond that of human foresight awed the soul of Peter, and forced from him the cry of ver. 8. To us the connection between this sign and the sense of sinfulness may not be obvious. To Peter the sign came within the sphere of his own comprehension, and was the Divine seal to all those words and deeds of His Master which had gone before. ‘*They forsook all*’—not necessarily the permanent forsaking or their calling, but the sense of a more

SKETCH MAP OF VALLEY OF ESDRAELON



Roads

Scale: 1 inch = 10 miles

pressing call than that of conserving the results of that great haul. Servants could see to the fish; they could not afford to miss the business on which their Master went" (Huntley).

Aim of this Lesson

To show another way in which the first disciples were attracted to Jesus.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers the names of those five men who left John the Baptist to follow Jesus?

Fishing in Galilee—Four of these men were fishermen from Bethsaida, a part of the big town of Capernaum which was not far from Nazareth. Tell about the two pairs of brothers. Even when they were quite little boys they sometimes went with their fathers in the boats, and soon they learnt to catch fish too. Describe the life of a fisherman—fishing all night—in the morning coming back to shore, selling fish, washing their boats, cleaning and mending nets—then resting ready to go out again just before dark.

Meeting Jesus—These four men had gone along with the crowds to hear John the Baptist, and it was then that they had met Jesus—let the children recall details. And they had gone back to Galilee with Him, but they had not yet decided to stay with Him all the time—perhaps He had not yet asked them to do so. So they had gone back to their fishing again, but they must often have thought and spoken of Jesus and wondered when they would see Him again.

Lending His Boat—And then one day He came to Capernaum where they were living. They were all four feeling very sad and disappointed that morning. Describe their unsuccessful night and how they were spending the morning getting ready for better work the next night. While they were doing this a crowd of people was collecting on the shore. They had no time to pay any attention to them till some one came and spoke to them. It was Jesus! Tell what He asked them to do (v. 3), and explain that He wanted to teach the people, but could not make Himself heard with them crowding all round Him. Help the children to appreciate

Peter's difficulty and possible hesitation—after such a bad night he needed all his time to prepare for trying again. But at once he did as Jesus asked and he kept the boat in the right position all the time Jesus talked to the crowd.

Leaving All—Read what Jesus said to Peter when He had finished teaching, v. 4 and Peter's reply, v. 5. Everybody knew that that was a bad time for fishing and the people on the shore would laugh at them if they went, but Peter felt he must do what his new Friend said, so he went further out and began fishing. Describe vividly the result (v. 6, 7). Read what Peter said, v. 8. Of course he would have been very sorry if Jesus had gone, but he felt he was not fit to have such a wonderful Friend as that. Read what Jesus said, v. 10, and tell how they all four then left their business to become Jesus' disciples for the rest of their lives. And now He is calling us to be His disciples too—it will not mean that we are to leave our homes like these four men did, but Jesus wants us for His disciples right here where we are living now.

LESSON 6

THE FRIENDS IN BETHANY

Luke x. 38-42 ; John xi. 1-45

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

The miracle of the raising of Lazarus "is related with such photographic minuteness of detail, that it is clear that the evangelist was present. Three points about it are specially noteworthy: (1) that it was a physical miracle, which no ingenuity can reduce to a case of faith-healing; (2) that it was definitely worked to produce faith in Christ (xi. 42); (3) that more than any other miracle it was performed under test conditions: the object of it was really dead (xi. 39), and hostile witnesses were present (xi. 42). Its spiritual meaning is given in xi. 25, 'I am the resurrection, and the life.' The raising of Lazarus to

corporeal life is to the evangelist a token and pledge that the worker of it can raise the dead soul to spiritual life, and endue it with a blessed immortality. The publicity and notoriety of this miracle explain the warm welcome which Jesus received from the inhabitants of Jerusalem at His triumphal entry on Palm Sunday . . . Our Lord waited two days (1) that the death of Lazarus might be an indisputable fact: cp. xi. 39; (2) that there might be time for a competent number of witnesses to assemble: cp. xi. 42. There is a seeming want of tenderness to the sisters in allowing Lazarus to die, and then making them wait four days for the miracle; but wider interests than those of a single family were involved. Moreover, the delay was the means of testing and strengthening the sisters' faith; cp. xi. 22, 27, 32" (Dummelow).

"To Jesus the whole scene was one of pain, partly because of His intense sympathy with the sorrows of others and partly perhaps in indignation that such havoc should be wrought by death, the fruit of sin (Rom. v. 12; Jas. i. 15). His whole frame shook with repressed emotion (xi. 33) as He said to them 'Where have ye laid him?' . . . Consider the significance of this incident in connexion with the whole subject of death. Death is plainly not the end of the human spirit, for Lazarus was recalled. The continuity of life after death is asserted; and Jesus said that the soul that believes in Him should never die. Death to the one united with Christ, then, is merely the transition from one room in the Father's House to another, a greater. See 2 Cor. v. 1, 6, 8" (Bible Course for High Schools).

Aim of this Lesson

To show Jesus' power over death.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the names of Jesus' four friends about whom we heard last week.

The Family at Bethany—As time went on many other people in different places became His friends, and there was one family living near Jerusalem who were amongst

Jesus' very best friends. Give the names of the sisters and the brother. We read of their being in the house of Simon the leper. Explain that we are not told what relation he was to the other three, but some people think he was Martha's husband, and surely he must have been one of the people who was healed by Jesus. They evidently had a nice home at Bethany, big enough to entertain guests, for here Jesus and His disciples loved to come. Tell very briefly of the time, perhaps the first time, that Jesus took a meal there—how Mary was so interested in His talking that she forgot all about getting food ready and left Martha to do all the work. Read their conversation, x. 40-42, explaining that "one thing is needful" means "do not trouble to prepare so elaborate a meal—one dish only is necessary." Evidently Martha was anxious to honour her guest.

Sorrow in the Home—It was some time after this that one day Lazarus was taken ill. Picture the rapid increase of the disease, the anxiety and sorrow of the sisters. Jesus had often been to see them since that first day and they looked upon Him as their best friend, and now in their sorrow their minds turned to Him and to His wonderful power to heal. But He was far away, they were not quite sure where. But as Lazarus grew worse and the doctor gave up hope, they sent a messenger to find Jesus and bring Him to them. How long the messenger was gone we do not know, but not many hours after he started Lazarus died. Tell of the funeral and picture the sad family and their comforters (xi. 19). And then the messenger returned, but alone—Jesus had not come—think how perplexed they were. Imagine the messenger telling what he had heard Jesus say (xi. 4)—but Lazarus *had* died—what could Jesus have meant?

Joy in the Family—Another two days went by—and then news came that Jesus was coming. Picture Martha going outside the town to meet Him and read their conversation xi. 21-27. Then she ran back for Mary (xi. 28-30). Vividly describe their meeting and Jesus' grief when He saw the sorrow of His friends (xi. 32-35). Picture them going to the tomb with a crowd following. Tell the conversation between Jesus and Martha (xi. 39, 40), and Jesus' prayer of thanks-

giving (xi. 41, 42). Vividly tell what happened next (xi. 43, 44). Imagine the joy of the sisters and the wonder of all the crowd. Recall the fact that Jesus had told Martha that her brother should rise again—what did Martha think Jesus meant? (xi. 24). But now she knew that Jesus had meant something quite different. How they must have loved Jesus and wondered at His power!

LESSON 7

NEW FRIENDS IN JERICH0

Luke xviii. 35-xix. 11

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

In connection with the incident in the eighteenth chapter, read also Matt. xx. 29-34 and Mark x. 46-52, noting the differences in the accounts. Possibly the second blind man was not so well known as Bartimaeus and hence is not mentioned by two of the writers. Mark alone gives the name. Perhaps the incident happened between old and new Jericho which would account for the discrepancy regarding location. For details about Jericho read Josh. vi. 1, 20 - it was a fortified city even in those days—1 Kings xvi. 34; Deut. xxxiv. 3; 2 Kings ii. 19-22. It stood at the foot of the hills near the southern ford of the Jordan (see map) so that travellers coming from Perea to Jerusalem would naturally pass through it. We are only told this once of Jesus being there, but since Jews seldom went through Samaria but travelled by the eastern side of Jordan in going between Judea and Galilee, He had probably been through several times. Consider Bartimaeus. His *faith* is indicated by the title he gave Jesus—others said 'Jesus of Nazareth,' he gave Him Messiah's name. His *perseverance* is very marked—in spite of all obstacles he was determined to get to Jesus and it is well he did for Jesus never came that way again. His *gratitude* resulted in others also praising God. Consider the disciples—how was it none of them thought of bringing the blind man to Jesus till told to do so?



JESUS AND ZACCHAEUS

"There must have been at Jericho one of the principal custom houses, both on account of the considerable traffic which took place on this road, by which lay the route from Perea to Judea and Egypt. Zacchæus was at the head of this office." To appreciate the Jews' attitude to publicans see Matt. ix. 11; xi. 19; xviii. 17. They were Jews in the employ of the Roman Government for the purpose of collecting custom dues, and they regularly used their office for exacting more than the right amount. Zacchæus was no better than the rest, xix. 8. He acknowledged himself a thief and as proof of his repentance restored more than was required by law—only the convicted thief had to restore four-fold, Exod. xxii. 1. Compare Zacchæus with Levi or Matthew, v. 27-30, and with xviii. 9-14.

"What was it that called out Zacchæus' repentance? Not the criticism of his people, but the presence of One before Whom his morality stood for the first time condemned. The murmurs of the people perhaps were necessary to wake the slumbering conscience of the man, and at once he saw the only true way of repentance—restitution. Note how his public offer exceeded the demands of the law. This would have been fulfilled without the gift to the poor, which sprang perhaps from a finer consciousness of gifts long withheld. It is not clear whether the offer was made in the street or in the house at Zacchæus' feast. In any case there would soon be a gathering of claimants, both for restitution and charity. No triumph of Christ's life is greater than this over avarice and dishonesty" (Huntley).

Aim of this Lesson

To show that Jesus will welcome as His friends those also who are not amongst respectable people.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Talk about blindness—why do doctors not heal blind people? See that the children realise the hopelessness of such cases.

The Blind Man—At the time when Jesus was living in Palestine a blind man named Bartimæus was living in one of

the towns, called Jericho. We do not know whether he had been born blind, but he had probably lost his sight quite early—eye diseases are common in that country and at that time doctors knew little about how to cure them. So he had probably grown up as a blind boy and as his father was a poor man had very early begun to beg as we so often see blind boys doing in India. Portray his life and its disabilities so as to draw out the children's sympathy for him. It made no difference to him that Jericho was a beautiful place—he never saw it—and so he grew up to manhood with no prospect before him of anything but begging in his darkness.

"Jesus of Nazareth Passeth by"—And then from time to time he began to hear tales of a wonderful new Preacher Who healed sick people also—perhaps he heard a great deal of discussion about whether this man could be the Messiah or not, and thinking it all over in his mind he concluded that this must be indeed He. But how could he get to this Messiah to be healed? Some said Jesus had been in Jericho three or four times, passing through with others from Galilee to the feasts at Jerusalem—would He ever come again? And if He did would it be possible to find out in time that He was there? Did the blind man perhaps pray that God would send this Healer where he could get to Him? And now the great annual feast of Passover was again approaching. Bartimæus knew that it would be a great time for him for the feast times were always the best—not only were there crowds passing through from Galilee and Perea, but they were all in holiday mood; and, just as it is in India to-day, the beggars knew they would get more money given then than at any other time of year. But we can imagine that deep in the heart of Bartimæus was also the hope that Jesus might be coming that way. At last the time arrived. Picture Bartimæus taking his place near the city gate where the crowd must pass. Describe his appearance and the way he would accost passers-by. For some days pilgrims would be going to Jerusalem, then coming back—even at night the beggars would hardly leave their posts lest some chance be missed. Then one day came sounds of something unusual in the crowd. Tell what the blind man said and read the reply he received, xviii. 37. Imagine what must have been his thoughts and hopes at that. Read his cry,

xviii. 38, and tell how it was repeated over and over again. Picture the scorn of the passers-by as they tried to silence him.

"Thy Faith hath Saved Thee"—Meanwhile Jesus drew nearer and nearer but Bartimæus did not know it and still kept up his cry and still the people tried to stop him. It would have been so easy to have taken him by the hand and led him to Jesus but no one thought of doing it, or they were afraid others would laugh at them if they showed kindness to such a man. Jesus alone of all that crowd felt sympathy for him and when He came opposite where the man sat He stood still. Tell what He said—then at last someone did go to help the blind man! Picture the scene as the man came to Jesus and read what each said, xviii. 41, 42. Vividly describe what followed—think Who was the first Person the blind man saw? What would he next look for? Tell of his gratitude and the result of his praising.

The Chief Publican—Amongst those who heard about Bartimæus was a man named Zacchæus who was the chief publican in Jericho. Tell briefly who the publicans were and how the Jews despised them. Zacchæus was a Jew, but because of his trade no good Jew would have anything to do with him. No matter how much he may have wanted to live a good life when he began that work, only the other out-castes like himself would associate with him, so he soon became as bad as they. He had a big house and many other good things, but as people walked by his house they knew it was bought with money stolen from the traders, and they hated and despised him as much as they despised all publicans. But like Bartimæus he had heard of Jesus, and though he had no infirmity of the body to be healed he also wanted to see the new Preacher. Perhaps he had heard that one of Jesus' disciples, Matthew, had been a publican like himself and that made him all the more anxious to see. And so when he heard that Jesus was in Jericho he determined to see Him.

Jesus and Zacchæus—But he soon found himself in a difficulty. He was a very little man—perhaps he had never realised how little till he tried to see Jesus that day. Have the children ever tried to mix in a crowd of grown-up people and then to see what is going on around? They could not see

over the people's heads and neither could Zacchæus that day, and he could not see between the people. Picture the little man vainly trying to get a view—then tell of the happy thought that came to him as he saw the big tree, something like a banyan, at the roadside. No doubt he had often climbed it as a boy, but that was long ago—think how the people round him laughed as they saw the wealthy little man whom they hated so much climbing up into the tree. But from there he saw Jesus. And as Jesus walked under the branches of the tree He looked up and saw Zacchæus. Read what Jesus said, xix. 5, and picture vividly how Zacchæus obeyed (xix. 6.) Think what it meant to him to have this respectable Man willing to come to his house. Tell of the angry looks of the crowd and read their murmur, xix. 7—not one of them would have disgraced himself by going to such a house. And Zacchæus heard their words and was filled with shame as he realised that he was a bad man, and with one like Jesus coming to his house he determined to be done with his sin and live a good life henceforth. Read xix. 8, and help the children to understand its full significance. Read xix. 9, 10. Zacchæus had no disease or infirmity to be healed like some of the people we read about, but his relief and joy were just as great in knowing that his wicked life was forgiven. What a good thing it is to know that Jesus can give peace like this to a troubled conscience.

EASTERTIDE STORIES

LESSON 8

ARRESTED

Luke xxii. 1-62.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Teachers should make a study of the attitude of the Jewish leaders to our Lord and the reasons for their animosity. Note how large a place His regard of the Sabbath had in determining their actions—make a list of the things He did on the Sabbath that angered them. Consider what it was that made so many of those who followed Him for a time go back. Study particularly Judas and the motives for his betrayal. He had joined the band of disciples like the rest and Jesus had chosen him because of the possibilities he had in him. But instead of rising to his privileges and drawing nearer to his Master as the rest did, he drifted away until he was altogether out of touch, and finally became a traitor.

Peter on the other hand, in spite of his defects, grew closer to Jesus. Note each detail recorded of him during our Lord's last night on earth and consider in what particular he sinned each time : (a) at supper, self-confidence, xxii. 33 : (b) in the garden, failure in prayer, xxii. 45 ; (c) at the arrest, fear and impetuosity, xxii. 50, John xviii. 10 ; (d) in the palace, fear issuing in untruthfulness and profanity, xxii. 54-60, Mark xiv. 71. Peter " was to begin with, a man of the strongest, the most wilful, and the most wayward impulses ; impulses that, but for the watchfulness and the prayerfulness of his Master, might easily have become the most headlong and destructive passions. . . But by degrees and under the teaching, the example, and the training of his Master, Peter's too-hot heart was gradually brought under control till it became the seat in Peters' bosom of a deep, pure, deathless love and adoration for Jesus Christ.

Amid all Peter's stumbles and falls this always brought him right again and set him on his feet again—his absolutely enthusiastic love and adoration for his Master. This, indeed, after his Master's singular grace to Peter, was always the redeeming and restraining principle in Peter's wayward and wilful life. To the very end of his three years with his Master, Peter was full of a most immature character and an unreduced and unbridled mind and heart. He had the making of a very noble man in him, but he was not easily made, and his making cost both him and his Master dear. . . . You may be sure that it was as much to himself as to the murderers of the Prince of Life that Peter went on that day to preach and say, 'Repent, therefore, that your sins may be blotted out; since God hath sent His Son to bless you in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.' The truth is, by this time, the unspeakably awful sinfulness of Peter's own sin had completely drunk up all the human shame of it" (Whyte).

Aim of this Lesson

To convey a warning against the weakness which overcame the disciples.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers what happened to Jesus the day He preached in the synagogue at Nazareth? After that more and more people began to be angry with Him for different reasons. After He had raised Lazarus from the dead, there was such excitement about it that the leading priests in Jerusalem said this must stop or all the nation would be following Jesus. They therefore offered a reward to anyone who would help them to arrest Him. Yet in spite of that, as we heard last week, He was going again to the city for the big feast. How brave of Him!

At Supper—Each day of the feast week Jesus and His disciples mixed freely in the crowds in city and Temple till the great last day of the feast approached. Tell of their preparations for this (xxii. 7-13). Describe the company that evening at supper. All the time Jesus was very

sad—help the children to feel as the disciples felt it, the foreboding of something terrible going to happen. Read xxii. 21-23. No wonder Jesus was sad when He knew that in his band of chosen friends there was one who could do that! How shocked all the others must have been. But they did nothing to prevent Judas doing it—perhaps they hardly understood it. Read His warring to Peter, xxii. 31, 32, and Peter's reply, xxii. 33. He thought Jesus was afraid they would all leave Him like Judas had done, so tried to cheer Him by this assurance. Read xxii. 34. What could it all mean?

In the Garden—Picture them going out in the dark, quiet evening, just twelve of them for Judas had already gone, and describe very quietly what happened in the garden (xxii. 39-46). Again help the children to feel that Jesus had some terrible weight on His mind. Read xxii. 46. Did they wonder why He thus again suggested that they might fail Him as Judas had done? Even as He spoke they could see lights moving among the trees and hear many voices talking. And at that minute Judas appeared—picture the scene vividly (xxii. 47-49) giving the added details from John's account (John xviii. 3-8). Peter was the only one who made any attempt to save Jesus and what he did was really very foolish, for it might have led to a fight and the arrest of all the disciples—describe what he did and what Jesus did (xxii. 50, 51). Then all the disciples were overcome with fear and without thinking any more of helping Jesus, they all ran away (Mark xiv. 50), even Peter.

In the Palace—Tell how Jesus was taken back to the city, a prisoner in the hands of His enemies. Now although Peter had run away he really loved Jesus very much, and he soon determined to go and see what happened to Him. Picture him and John stealthily following the crowd at a distance and being admitted into the high priest's palace to which Jesus had been taken (xxii. 54, John xviii. 15). Peter went over to the fire to warm himself—tell what happened to him there (xxii. 55-58). What a dreadful thing he had done—and it was just what Jesus had said he would do. He was frightened at being recognised so went out to the porch (Mark xiv. 68). Tell graphically of his further

denial (xxii. 59, 60). Just then a cock crew, and at that minute Peter saw Jesus turn and look at him (xxii. 61)—then evidently Jesus had heard all Peter had said. Immediately the warning Jesus had given at the supper table flashed into Peter's mind, and he realised what a terrible thing he had done. Picture his remorse (xxii. 62). John stayed to watch what they did with Jesus, but surely Peter could only think of his awful sin, and how he had grieved and failed his Master just at the moment when He most needed comfort. Are there any times when you are afraid to say you are a Christian?

LESSON 9

CRUCIFIED

Luke xxii. 63—xxiii. 56

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

The teacher will be most helped by reading all four accounts of the trial and crucifixion of Jesus, writing down in their probable order the events, and especially noting which are told only by Luke. See on a plan of Jerusalem the position of the various buildings and note the distance Jesus must have walked that night, always hurried and jostled by the crowd. Consider each of the people mentioned in the passage:—Pilate, the Roman Governor; Herod, Idumean Jew; Barabbas, the Jewish seditionist; Simon, the Cyrenian Jew; the women of Jerusalem who wept; the two thieves who were crucified; the soldiers who gambled for His clothes; the centurion who was in charge; Joseph the counsellor. Make a list of the seven things Jesus said while He was on the cross. Compare xxiii. 34 with Matt. v. 44 and vi. 14, 15.

Aim of this Lesson

To show the sinlessness of Jesus.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the arrest of Jesus and the flight of the disciples. Whom do the children think felt most sad and lonely that night: Judas, the other disciples, or Jesus?

Before Pilate—Not once that night was Jesus allowed to rest—He was taken from the garden up the hill and across the city to the high priest's house, where the priests and leaders of the Jews questioned Him, argued about Him, got false witnesses to come and tell lies about Him. They wanted to kill Him, but the law of their Roman rulers was that only the Roman Governor should condemn to death, so they had to try and get up such a case against Jesus that the Governor would be willing to pass the death sentence. As soon as it was daylight they hurried their prisoner to another part of the city where was the Governor's palace. Describe the scene vividly as "the whole multitude" accused Him. Think how puzzled Pilate must have been as every one shouted at once. What had the Prisoner done? At last Pilate heard a definite charge—read xxiii. 2—that was one of the lies a false witness told. Read xxiii. 4. Explain how Jesus came to be sent to Herod (xxiii. 5-7).

Before Herod—Picture Jesus, with an escort of Roman soldiers and followed by the shouting crowd of Jews, being taken to Herod's palace close by Pilate's. Now Herod, being the Governor of Galilee where Jesus had spent so much time, had often heard of this new Preacher and wanted to see Him. Tell how he tried to converse with Him and failed (xxiii. 9). John the Baptist (do the children remember about him?) had often talked to Herod and warned him to give up his sin, but Herod took no notice of him, so now Jesus had nothing more to say to him. Picture the wild scene outside the palace (xxiii. 10). Then Herod determined to make fun of Jesus—graphically describe how he did it (xxiii. 11) and tell how Jesus was sent back to Pilate. Both these Governors were now convinced that Jesus was innocent but they were afraid of that angry crowd and wanted to pacify them.

Condemned by Pilate—Picture Pilate now calling together the Jewish leaders as he sat in state in his judgment hall

(xxiii. 13), and read what he said to them, xxiii. 14-16. It was a concession the Romans made to the Jews to release some prisoner at Passover time and Pilate thought he might get out of his difficulty by releasing Jesus. Read what the crowd replied, xxiii. 18, and imagine how they yelled it. Tell who Barabbas was. Again Pilate tried to reason with them (xxiii. 20), but louder than ever they shouted—read xxiii. 21, 22. Imagine the scene that followed till Pilate gave sentence as they desired (xxiii. 23-25). If the teacher can secure a copy of the picture "Christ before Pilate" it should be shewn to the children at this point to help them to realise the calm dignity of Jesus in the midst of all this rabble and confusion.

Crucified—Describe the scene as Jesus was taken out of the city to Calvary. Two others were to be crucified that day and probably all three started together, each carrying his cross (John xix. 17), but apparently Jesus was unable to carry His (let the children suggest why) so Simon, who happened to be passing, was made to do so. Think with what satisfaction they gloated over their victim as they followed Him through the city—out of the gate—on to the execution ground. Describe how the prisoners were nailed on to the crosses as they lay on the ground—then the crosses were stood and fixed in the ground. Read the words written over Jesus, xxiii. 38; and what the mocking people said, xxiii. 35, 37, 39. Read what Jesus said, xxiii. 34. Read what the thief said and his conversation with Jesus, xxiii. 40-43. At a time like that Jesus thought only of other people and how to help them! All this had taken place before midday, and at 12 o'clock an extraordinary thing happened—describe it (xxiii. 44, 45). Read Jesus' last words, xxiii. 46, and the acknowledgment of the officer in charge, xxiii. 47.

Buried—Among the crowd who watched was one of the Jewish leaders who had never consented to Jesus' death. As soon as he saw that Jesus was really dead he went alone to Pilate with a request. Tell what this was and briefly describe the burial of Jesus (xxiii. 50-53). Make no further comment but read impressively what Peter wrote about this long afterwards, 1 Peter ii. 21-24.

LESSON 10

RISEN

Luke xxiv. 1-48

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"The most careful preparation—alike of the teacher and the lesson—is necessary if the message of Easter is to be given aright. It is easy to make it a day of flowers and spring songs but fail to set its joy in the solemn setting of the Cross . . .

"Consider the impression made by the story of the Crucifixion on children. We must recognise vital differences here between under 12 and over 12. The Junior child may be very slow in losing his early fears of many things associated with the story. The grave, the dead body, the wrappings, the suggestion of something ghost-like in the risen Christ, all offer pitfalls to the teacher who may be too anxious to tell the whole story. On the other hand there are dangers of appealing to a morbid interest, or suggesting real physical terrors, in describing the horrors of the nails or the sufferings on the Cross. Teachers of younger classes must leave out much if they would help the children to feel the Kingliness of the Crucified" (Huntley).

Our Easter story this year is confined to the experiences of the two who were not of the twelve and are otherwise unknown. It must be told entirely from their standpoint. Their obscurity is an added proof of the truth of the story. They evidently left Jerusalem before anyone had actually seen the Lord, xxiv. 22-24. Before they reached the city again He had been seen by Mary Magdalen, by all the women together and by Peter.

"In the evening according to St. Mark, Jesus appeared 'to the eleven as they sat at meat.' St. John is more precise, noting the absence of Thomas. St. Luke says that Jesus appeared 'to the eleven and them that were with them.' . . . (The doors were shut) a clear indication that our Lord's body had become a spiritual body, and was no longer subject to the

ordinary laws of matter, or the conditions of space. . . Yet there is no suggestion of an unreal or phantom body, for He offers it to be handled (xxiv. 39; John xx. 27); and even eats before them (xxiv. 42; Acts x. 41). It is to be presumed that Jesus closed the interview by mysteriously vanishing" (Dummelow).

Aim of this Lesson

To make sure that the children realise that Jesus is alive.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the fact that although Jesus had only twelve special disciples, He had many more friends, and many of these were in Jerusalem when He was killed.

The Two from Emmaus—Amongst these friends were two of whom we never hear again, either before or after, and we know the name of only one. He was Cleopas from Emmaus, a village 7 miles from Jerusalem. The other one may have been his wife, some people think, but more likely it was some other man—we are not told. But like all good Jews they had been to Jerusalem for the Passover Feast and knew all about Jesus dying—perhaps they were amongst those who had watched that dreadful scene.

The Easter Morning—Like many others they had also stayed in Jerusalem over the Sabbath day and were preparing to return home on Sunday morning. But before they started strange tidings reached them. Of course the children know what they heard—let them tell, seeing that they have the order of events clearly in mind:—(1) the coming of the women to the tomb, and what they found: (2) the coming of Peter and John and how far they were enabled to corroborate the women's story. No one could understand it at all.

Going to Emmaus—And then Cleopas and his friend had to leave the city and go home. Think how they talked things over as they went. Picture another Traveller coming along the road and joining them. Read their conversation, helping the children to realise what the men felt like—not recognising their Companion but feeling strangely drawn to Him, and

thrilled by His conversation—xxiv. 17-26. Tell how He then explained many things they had not understood in the Bible (xxiv. 27). But still they did not recognise Him.

Reaching Home—They had been so interested listening to Him that they hardly realised how far they had walked and were home almost before they knew it. Tell what they said to their Companion (xxiv. 29) and picture them going in and getting ready for their meal. Read impressively what happened, xxiv. 30, 31. It was the Lord Himself!

In Jerusalem Again—Without stopping a minute to think how tired they were they said to each other, "Let us go back to Jerusalem and tell the others they must know at once!" Imagine how they hurried back. It was quite dark when they reached the city. They knew just where to find the others—in that upper room where they had so often met. And up the stairs they ran—burst into the room, and breathlessly told their story. And even as they talked they were conscious of another Presence in the room and looking they saw Him, and they all recognised Him—it was Jesus Himself! Tell how He ate with them, showing them that it was really He and not a ghost (xxiv. 41-43). And from that day all of them began doing what the two from Emmaus had done already—went and told the news to other people. Thus began the work of spreading the good news over the world, and in this work we may also have a share if we will.

LESSON 11

ASCENDED

Luke xxiv. 49-53; Acts i. 1-14; ii. 1-14, 36.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

It would help the teacher to "compare carefully the endings of the four Gospels. Matthew tells only of the Great commission in Galilee: Mark in his strangely crowded ending gives only the statement, 'He was received up . . .'



A VIEW IN JERUSALEM

(xvi. 19); John never mentions the Ascension. Only Luke gives the locality, and, in Acts i. 1-11, the wonderful story of the cloud and the angelic promise. He only also tells of the forty days Read Acts iii. 21 and John xvi. 7, etc. It was necessary for Christ to go away, but His return is as necessary. Note that the charge given to His disciples was a very simple one 'Witnesses unto Me' Let that be our supreme aim in each Bible story" (Huntley).

With the last of the forty days our lesson today commences. See again on the map Bethany and the Mount of Olives. 'They were now commanded to wait, i. 4. "Promise of the Father," see John xiv. 16, 17. Note the double question the disciples asked, i. 6. "When?", "Wilt Thou?", and His double answer, "The time is secret," i. 7; "Not I but you," i. 8. They had not realised before that this was their responsibility. Note how many disciples there were by this time, i. 15—in Galilee 500 had met together 1 Cor. xv. 6. It is unlikely that such a large company had witnessed the Ascension but they probably all shared in the Pentecost experience, ii. 1. It would be interesting to find on the map all the places mentioned in ii. 9-11—people from the east were probably the descendants of those Jews staying behind after the Captivity—at this time many had also travelled west for trade and other purposes. Feast time always meant a large gathering of the "foreign Jews" in Jerusalem. The teacher should read for himself the whole of Acts ii, to fill out the picture of this beginning of the Christian Church in Jerusalem.

Aim of this Lesson

To show the means by which Christ controls the work of His Church today.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the fact of our Lord's Resurrection and tell how that after the Resurrection day He appeared several times to His disciples and friends, in different places—Jerusalem first, then in Galilee.

In Jerusalem Again—And now another of the Jerusalem Feasts was drawing near—Pentecost which occurred just seven weeks after Passover—so they all went back to Jerusalem to be there for that. And there, while they were met again in their usual meeting place one day Jesus appeared amongst them again. Read what He told them to do, i. 4, 5, and imagine how they wondered what it could mean—evidently they were to have some wonderful new experience. Then read their question and His answer, i. 6-8, and help the children to understand what the disciples understood by it—they had a great work to do, to make Jesus known all over the world.

On the Mount of Olives—Then Jesus took these disciples for a walk—their favourite walk to Bethany and over the Mount of Olives—imagine how they still talked of these wonderful things by the way. When they got up on to the mountain He blessed them as if He were leaving them (Luke xxiv. 50, 51)—and immediately He did leave them—describe how He went (i. 9). No wonder the disciples stood gazing up to where they had seen Him disappear! Read i. 11, and picture the disciples starting and looking round to see who this could be speaking to them—describe what they saw (i. 10). Now they began to understand a little—Jesus had gone back to Heaven and left them to make Him known and to prepare His kingdom before He came back. Picture them returning joyfully to Jerusalem (Luke xxiv. 52). But they could not begin this work at once—He had told them to wait in Jerusalem for something else to happen.

Pentecost—They had not long to wait—Feast time had almost come and it was on the Feast day that the great event they were waiting for happened. Picture them gathered again in their meeting place—this time not only the eleven disciples but many more, over 100—and describe vividly what happened (ii. 1-3). These tongues of fire were what they *saw*, but they *felt* something else—Someone was there, some powerful Presence was amongst them whom they could not see. Immediately they remembered what Jesus had promised—read John xiv. 16—this Comforter, Whom they now called the Holy Spirit, had come, and they could at once begin their work. In Jerusalem at this time were great

crowds of worshippers from many other countries—here was an opportunity for them to tell about Jesus the King to all these, who would then carry the news back to their distant homes. Picture them beginning to preach—many of them had never thought of doing such a thing before. Read what the people said about them, ii. 7, 8, 13. Then Peter stood up and, speaking so that all could hear, explained to them what had happened. And perhaps that was the most wonderful thing of all, for only just a few weeks before it was Peter who had been so frightened when someone said he was a follower of Jesus—do the children remember? But one of the first things the Holy Spirit did when He came was to make timid people like Peter brave and fearless, and He can still do that for any of us. That is the way the Christian Church began, and until everybody owns Jesus as King there is still work for every Christian to do in getting ready the Kingdom. What can we do?

STORIES OF PAUL, THE AMBASSADOR OF CHRIST

Aim

To kindle enthusiasm for Christ's service in the spread of the Gospel.

LESSON 12

THE SHINING LIGHT

(Acts vii. 58 ; viii. 1-3 ; ix. 1-20)

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Study carefully all allusions to Paul's early life—xxii. 3, 27, 28 ; xviii. 3 ; Phil. iii. 4-6. His Roman citizenship indicates a family of some influence and position, possibly of wealth. His two names, xiii. 9, also suggest Roman connections, Saul being a Jewish name and Paul Roman. It was a custom for every Jew, no matter what his social position, to learn a trade. In Tarsus tent-making was a leading trade, the cloth being woven from the hair of the goats which abounded in the neighbourhood. Paul, however, was not educated for a merchant, but for a rabbi. The statement "*brought up* at the feet of Gamaliel," xxii. 3, shows that he must have gone to Jerusalem while quite young, probably about thirteen years old, which was the age at which Jewish youths commenced the study of their law. xxvi. 4 also bears this out. But he cannot have been there during the ministry of either John the Baptist or our Lord, though he was there again at the martyrdom of Stephen not more than a few years after the Resurrection. His age at this time is uncertain—he is described as a young man, vii. 58. There is

reason to believe he was a little over thirty—he was born probably about the same time as Jesus. Compare xxvi. 9, 10, with John xvi. 2 and 1 Tim. i. 12, 13, and consider the terrible possibility of even with the best intentions doing things so contrary to the will of God.

Read and compare the two descriptions of his conversion given by Paul himself, xxii. 4-16 and xxvi. 12-19. Notice the fuller details of the vision given in these passages than in chap. ix. and that in talking to the Jews, Ananias is fully described but not even mentioned to Agrippa. Paul's vision was not a vision merely in the sense of an "inward impression made on the mind—it was the direct perception of the visible presence of Christ." See ix. 27; 1 Cor. ix. 1; xv. 8. Consider the words spoken to Saul by Jesus—there was no anger, nor even condemnation of his actions. The parabolic figure of the ox-goad (pricks) is in keeping with our Lord's habit of teaching by parables. Study carefully the implications of the phrase in the light of Rom. vii. 9-25. Up to the time when he first met Christianity "we have no reason to suppose that . . . he had any doubts about his own religion. We gather, indeed, from his writings that he had already passed through severe mental conflicts. Although the conviction still stood fast in his mind that the blessedness of life was attainable only in the favour of God, yet his efforts to reach this coveted position by the observance of the law had not satisfied him. On the contrary, the more he strove to keep the law the more active became the motions of sin within him; his conscience was becoming more oppressed with the sense of guilt, and the peace of a soul at rest in God was a prize which eluded his grasp. Still he did not question the teaching of the synagogue . . . The reason why he had not attained to peace and fellowship with God, was, he believed, because he had not struggled enough with the evil of his nature or honoured enough the precepts of the law. Was there no service by which he could make up for all deficiencies and win that grace at last in which the great of old had stood? . . . But on this journey doubt at last invaded his mind. It was a long journey of over a hundred and sixty miles; and with the slow means of locomotion then available, it would occupy at least six days . . .

It is not difficult to conceive whence these doubts arose. He was a scholar of Gamaliel, the advocate of humanity and tolerance, who had counselled the Sanhedrin to leave the Christians alone. He was himself too young yet to have hardened his heart to all the disagreeables of such ghastly work. Highly strung as was his religious zeal, nature could not but speak out at last. But probably his compunctions were chiefly awakened by the character and behaviour of the Christians. He had heard the noble defence of Stephen and seen his face in the council-chamber shining like that of an angel. He had seen him kneeling on the field of execution and praying for his murderers. Doubtless, in the course of the persecution, he had witnessed many similar scenes. Did these people look like enemies of God? . . . Their arguments, too, must have told on a mind like his" (Stalker).

Aim of this Lesson

To show how a man can be changed by meeting with Jesus.

Story for the Class

Introduction—On a map show Jerusalem and Tarsus and indicate the distance between them.

Living in Tarsus—About the same time that Jesus was born in Bethlehem there was a boy born in Tarsus who was also a Jew. His father was probably a merchant who had gone there for purposes of trade. Tell the boy's name and what his father's trade evidently was. Saul learnt that trade as he grew up, but his parents decided that he must not be a merchant but a rabbi, that is, a religious teacher. Imagine how carefully he would be taught all about his people's religion and the Old Testament, until when he was about thirteen years of age he was sent to Jerusalem, where he was taught by one of the chief rabbis there. Imagine his life in that ancient city as a student, and think how he would enjoy it. Jesus came sometimes to Jerusalem even in those days, but before He began to preach Saul had finished his studies and gone back home to Tarsus. So they had probably never met.

Returning to Jerusalem—But a few years after the great event we heard of last week, Saul again came to Jerusalem, and by that time a very large number of people had joined the followers of Jesus. Imagine how Saul inquired into this, and being a strict Jew, he was soon satisfied that the rulers had done right in killing Jesus, and that the followers of Jesus were wrong. The cleverest of the Christian preachers at the time was a man called Stephen, and Saul must often have disputed with him in the synagogue.

Persecuting the Christians—At last Stephen's influence was becoming so great that the rulers were afraid, so had him arrested and killed—perhaps some of the children remember the story of how he was killed? And while they stoned Stephen, Saul stood looking on—tell what he saw and heard (vii. 59, 60). But still he felt sure the Christians were wrong and the rulers right and the only way to prevent more people being deceived was to punish the Christians. So Saul at once began to do this with great energy and thoroughness. Describe in detail the persecution (viii. 3; Gal. i. 13). Imagine the distressing scenes he must have witnessed during those weeks; but it all made him more determined to persist and save others from this heresy, for he really believed he was doing God's will by trying to stamp out this new religion. Tell how those who managed to escape from Jerusalem fled to any place where they could get to.

Following the Refugees—When Saul thought he had stamped out the "heresy" in Jerusalem he began to enquire about where those had gone to who had escaped him. Imagine him, as he got the information, following them and bringing them back prisoners to Jerusalem. He visited the near-by cities first—then began to look beyond Judea for those who had gone to other countries. Tell how news came of numbers of Christians collecting in Damascus, the great city away to the north, and Saul determined to show his zeal by going even so far as that. For this he needed special letters of introduction from the high priest to the Jews in Damascus—tell how he got these (ix. 2) and describe his preparations. His official position demanded an imposing

escort, and of course he must have enough soldiers to bring back all his prisoners.

Travelling to Damascus—Picture their start from Jerusalem and the journey up through their own land, then out on to the desert road. It was going to take more than a week to reach Damascus, and this gave opportunity for quiet thought—the first time for many a week that Saul had been able to think leisurely over what he was doing. Imagine his thoughts at this time—his desire to serve God—his certainty that the Christians were wrong—yet his remembrance of Stephen's prayer and of what many another Christian had said and done when marched away to prison. Were they right after all? They certainly were good, loving, kind people, and it went against all his best feelings to ill-treat people as he had done them, but what they believed did not agree with what the rabbis taught. But even so, had not his old teacher, Gamaliel, said it was better not to persecute? (v. 34, 35, 39.) He had never been so doubtful about anything before—his conscience was very uneasy, making him feel he was wrong, yet in his mind he still believed he was doing right.

Seeing a Vision—Thus, torn in two ways, he came near to Damascus. There was the beautiful city just in front of them. Instead of resting during the midday heat they pressed on to get into the city and rest there, when suddenly a terrifying thing happened. They saw a brilliant light, brighter than the sun, and the escort heard a noise, a voice it sounded like. Describe what they did (xxvi. 14), and read the words Saul heard and what he replied, ix. 4-6. Explain that the "pricks" were Saul's awakened conscience and point out that all his opposition ceased at once, and he was willing to obey Jesus—he knew that he had been wrong and the Christians were right.

Reaching Damascus—Tell how when he tried to go on to Damascus he could not, for the light had blinded him (ix. 8). Picture him being led there and tell how for three days he was so overwhelmed with remorse and wonder that he ate nothing (ix. 9). Imagine the consternation of those to whom he had come. Describe how a visitor then came to see him, and read what he said, ix. 17. Immediately Saul's sight came back and the first thing he saw was the kind face of his visitor

(xxii. 18). Imagine how Saul asked, "How did you know about me?" and tell the visitor's explanation (ix. 10-16). At once Saul joined the Christians in that city and began preaching about Jesus and telling how he was now convinced that He was really the Messiah, the Saviour.

LESSON 13

LEFT FOR DEAD

Acts xiii. 1-3; xiv. 1-21

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Our lesson to-day introduces us to the first missionary effort to the Gentiles undertaken by the Church. There is great uncertainty as to the length of time which elapsed between Saul's conversion and his starting of his missionary career. Carefully study the events which happened during that period, Gal. i. 15-18, Acts ix. 22-30.

"In this interval took place that revolution—one of the most momentous in the history of mankind—by which the Gentiles were admitted to equal privileges with the Jews in the Church of Christ. This change proceeded from the original circle of apostles in Jerusalem, and Peter, the chief of the apostles, was the instrument of it. By the vision of the sheet of clean and unclean beasts, which he saw at Joppa, he was prepared for the part he was to play in this transaction, and he admitted the Gentile Cornelius of Caesarea and his family to the Church by baptism without circumcision. This was an innovation involving boundless consequences. It was a necessary preliminary to Paul's mission-work, and subsequent events were to show how wise was the divine arrangement that the first Gentile entrants into the Church should be admitted by the hands of Peter rather than by those of Paul" (Stalker).

Carefully trace the route of Paul's first missionary journey, noting that on the return Cyprus was left out. Compare their experiences at each of the eight places mentioned. It is

obvious that at the beginning Barnabas was the leader of the expedition—his name occurs first, and the fact that Cyprus, where his old home was, iv. 36, should be the first place visited, also suggests this. But from that time Paul became the leader, and henceforth he is always called by his Roman name. In Cyprus, “an access of the Spirit seizing and enabling him to overcome all obstacles, he covered the Jewish magician with disgrace, converted the Roman Governor, and founded in the town a Christian Church in opposition to the Greek shrine. From that hour Barnabas sank into the second place and Paul took his natural position as the head of the mission . . . Can we conceive what their procedure was like in the towns they visited? It is difficult, indeed, to picture it to ourselves. As we try to see them with the mind’s eye entering any place, we naturally think of them as the most important personages in it; to us their entry is as august as if they had been carried on a car of victory. Very different, however, was the reality. They entered a town as quietly and as unnoticed as any two strangers who may walk into one of our towns any morning. Their first care was to get a lodging; and then they had to seek for employment, for they worked at their trade wherever they went. Nothing could be more commonplace. Who could dream that this travel-stained man, going from one tentmaker’s door to another seeking for work, was carrying the future of the world beneath his robe!” (Stalker). The reason for John Mark’s leaving the party has been much disputed—it may have been because his relative now took a subordinate place, but the more probable, and less ignoble, reason would be that he was not yet convinced of the right of admitting Gentiles to the Church.

Aim of this Lesson

To encourage emulation of Paul’s fearlessness and zeal.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the fact that in last week’s lesson we left Saul in Damascus. For some time after that we hear very little of him, but now we find him in the great city of

Antioch. (A small map held in the teacher's hand will be a great help all through this lesson.)

In Antioch—What did he find in Antioch? Tell of the large Christian community there—how had they first heard the Gospel? When Saul was persecuting the Christians in Jerusalem, and when some fled to Damascus, some went to Antioch, and that was how the Church was begun there. Tell what Saul's work there was (xi. 26)—of course such a learned man as Saul was just the one to teach all these new Christians, many of whom were not Jews and did not know the Old Testament.

To Cyprus—Now read xiii. 2. What was this work? Perhaps they themselves did not realise quite what it was except that these two men were to go and preach in other cities. Describe the prayer meeting where they were commissioned to go (xiii. 3), and picture their departure. Tell how Barnabas determined to take his young nephew with him (xiii. 5; Col. iv. 10) and trace their course down the river Orontes to the port at the mouth, Seleucia, where they changed into a big sea-going vessel and sailed away to Cyprus. Apparently they spent the Sabbath day at Salamis and there preached in the Jews' synagogue, but they did not stay long there and soon went to Paphos the chief city on the west of the island. (Do not expect the children to learn the names of all these places, but tell the name in each case and pass on.) And there a wonderful thing happened—the Roman Governor was converted (xiii. 7, 12)! This Governor had the same Roman name as Saul, Paul, and for some reason from this time onward Saul is always called Paul—perhaps it was more convenient, now that they were so often among Gentiles, to use a Gentile name.

To Antioch—Trace on the map the route to Perga and note the high mountains that now lay in front of them. There were no railways, not even roads, over these mountains—there were no towns by the way, but robber bands infested the pathways, hiding amongst the rocks or jungle. But beyond those mountains were towns where no one had ever been to tell about Jesus, and Paul was determined to go there. Tell how John Mark left them and went back home, and suggest what you think the most likely reason for this; but

Barnabas said where Paul went he would go. Suggest details of their journey of more than a hundred miles over those high, wild mountains, and picture their arrival at Antioch. (This was, of course, not the same place they had started from but another town of the same name.) Here again on the Sabbath day they went into the synagogue with the other Jews and Paul told about Jesus. Read part of his speech, xiii. 26-33. Describe the eagerness of both Jews and Gentiles to hear (xiii. 42, 43). But the next Sabbath day so many Gentiles came to listen to the preaching that the Jews got very jealous and angry. Describe their behaviour (xiii. 45, 50) and the apostles' departure (xiii. 51).

In Lycaonia—Again the two men walked on and on through unknown country but this time on the high level land behind the mountains (see map). About 75 miles they went till they came to Iconium. Describe the events here (xiv. 1-4)—very similar to those in Antioch but at last they were driven out with violence (xiv. 5). Not far away was Lystra where they came next, and in that place there were evidently very few Jews. We only know of three—tell who these were (xvi. 1; 2 Tim. i. 5)—and imagine how Paul and Barnabas would very likely stay with them while visiting Lystra. They preached in the town and in the surrounding villages and soon there were many Christians, and these two women were amongst the first to believe in Jesus. One day as Paul was preaching in the bazaar a lame man was sitting at the edge of the crowd listening. Vividly describe what happened to him at the end of the sermon (xiv. 8-10). It was well Paul's preaching for that day was done, for the people were now so excited they would not have listened longer. As they were all talking in their own language Paul did not understand them, so he and Barnabas went home not knowing in the least what the people were thinking. Tell what the people thought and describe vividly what they did (xiv. 11-13). Imagine how horrified Paul was when he found they wanted to worship him—describe what he did, and read what he said, xiv. 15-17. Think how foolish the people must have felt then. Tell of the arrival just at that time of some of Paul's enemies from Iconium, and imagine the things they said to the people of Lystra (xiv. 19). The disappointed people were just in

the mood to listen—describe very vividly what they did to Paul. Picture his sorrowing friends standing round the bruised and bleeding body, and tell how their sorrow was turned to joy (xiv. 20). Describe their departure. It is probable that Paul was so badly hurt that he never entirely got over his injuries. In Derbe, the next place they came to, we read so little of what they did that perhaps Paul was too ill to do much.

The Return—It would have been quite easy from there for them to have gone through a pass in the mountains down to Tarsus, Paul's old home, but they were so anxious about the few Christians they had left in those towns from which they had been driven that they determined to go back the same way they had come and visit all those places again. How brave of them! Trace the journey on the map—the only place they did not go to was Cyprus where they had been well treated. Describe the welcome at Antioch (xiv. 26–28) and notice that they did not talk so much about their persecutions as about how so many people had become Christians.

LESSON 14

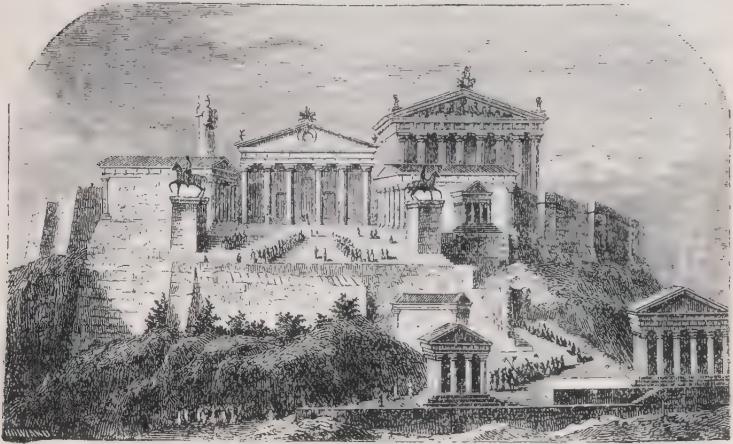
PRISON AND EARTHQUAKE

Acts xvi. 8–40

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“In his first journey Paul may be said to have been trying his wings; for his course, adventurous though it was, only swept in a limited circle round his native province. In his second journey he performed a far more distant and perilous flight. Indeed, this journey was not only the greatest he achieved but perhaps the most momentous recorded in the annals of the human race. . . It would appear that Paul reached Troas under the direction of the guiding Spirit without being aware whither his steps were next to be turned. But could he doubt what the divine intention was when, gazing

across the silver streak of the Hellespont, he beheld the shores of Europe on the other side?" (Stalker).



THE CHIEF TEMPLE IN ATHENS

Teachers should make a thorough study of this important journey. Of the first part of Paul's journey, from Antioch in the south-east to Troas in the north-west of Asia Minor, we have no details whatever though it may have occupied months or even years. Consider the guidance of the Holy Spirit as illustrated in Paul's experience here, xvi. 6, 10. Notice Paul's companions—Silas started with him, xv. 22, 40; Timothy joined them at Lystra, xvi. 1-3; and the change to the first person, xvi. 10, denotes that Luke joined them at Troas. Since Luke was probably a Greek from Macedonia he may have been the man Paul saw in his vision, xvi. 9. Paul's labours in Europe at this time were confined to Greece. Our lesson for the children deals primarily with the events in Philippi, the first city visited. Read the Epistle to that Church and notice that its great characteristic was generosity. A woman was the first convert there and the Epistle indicates that women continued to take a leading part in the work.

Compare the three conversions in Philippi dealt with in this chapter and see what different experiences the three people had.

Aim of this Lesson

To arouse the children's enthusiasm over the spread of Christianity.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers why the Church in Antioch had sent Paul and Barnabas on that long journey? (God had called them to the work.)

Travelling Again—But it was not only one journey to which Paul felt himself called—he was to give his whole life to going about preaching. So he had not been long back in Antioch after that first journey, when he felt it was time to go away again. This time he took with him a young man from Jerusalem named Silas, and they started away northward and then turned to the west. On a map show that this route would take them through Tarsus (what do the children know about that place?) and all those places behind the mountains that Paul and Barnabas had been to before. Tell how Timothy joined them at Lystra, and how for month after month they travelled on, preaching everywhere, till they came to Troas. Now there was the sea in front of them—what could they do next?

Seeing a Vision—That night Paul had a vision in a dream—tell what it was (xvi. 9.) Now Macedonia was the country across the sea, in Europe—at once Paul thought, “God wants me to go to Europe,” and without any delay he prepared to go. Picture these preparations—going down amongst the sailors on the wharf to find a boat going to that country—bargaining for fares—going on board. But now instead of three men there were four—describe the fourth—a doctor from Macedonia named Luke, who afterwards wrote all these stories about Paul. We do not know when he had become a Christian—perhaps just since Paul had come to Troas. Imagine how he may have urged Paul to go across to

Macedonia with his good news. So the four sailed across the sea to Europe.

Preaching in Philippi—It was not far—the next day they landed in Europe and an easy walk brought them to Philippi, the chief city in Macedonia. Now in most places they first found the Jews' synagogue and on the Sabbath day went there to worship, but here there does not seem to have been a synagogue and perhaps no Jews. But they heard of a little company of women who worshipped the Jews' God. Describe where they found them—how Paul preached and the result (xvi. 13-15). So the four men found a comfortable home there.

In Prison—They spent some time preaching in Philippi and then had a very bad experience. Tell of the poor mad girl who was being exploited by her bad masters—how she worried the preachers—and how Paul healed her (xvi. 16-18). Describe the anger of her masters and how they dragged Paul and Silas before the magistrates (xvi. 19, 20). Read their accusation, xvi. 20, 21. Vividly describe how the apostles were then treated (xvi. 22-24). Tell how they were spending the night (xvi. 25).

Released—Suddenly there was an earthquake—describe it and its effects (xvi. 26). The jailor knew that if he let any prisoners escape the penalty was death for him, and supposing that, of course, now the doors were open everybody was gone, he was just going to kill himself rather than wait for the executioner to do it. But a voice stopped him—read what he heard, xvi. 28, and describe what he did (xvi. 29). Read his question and Paul's reply, xvi. 30, 31. Whatever he had been as a young man this jailor was now a very hard and cruel man, but these were such unusual prisoners and he was in such a fright that he determined to talk more with them. Describe what he did (xvi. 33, 34) and what his prisoners did (xvi. 32). Read xvi. 35-40 and see that the children appreciate the humour of the situation and the bravery of the apostles.

LESSON 15

RIOTS

Acts xix. 1, 8-41; xx. 1

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"It might have been expected that, having in his second journey planted the gospel in Greece, Paul would in his third have made Rome his principal aim. But, if the map be referred to, it will be observed that, in the midst, between the regions of Asia Minor which he evangelised during his first journey and the provinces of Greece in which he planted churches in his second journey, there was a hiatus—the populous province of Asia in the west of Asia Minor. It was on this region that he descended in his third journey. Staying for no less than three years in Ephesus, its capital, he effectually filled up the gaps and connected together the conquests of his former campaigns. This journey included, indeed, at its beginning a visitation of all the churches formerly founded in Asia Minor and, at its close, a flying visit to the churches of Greece; but true to his plan of dwelling only on what was new in each journey, the author of the Acts has supplied us only with the details relating to Ephesus . . . The Epistle to the Ephesians, which sounds the lowest depths of Christian doctrine and scales the loftiest heights of Christian experience, is a testimony to the proficiency which Paul's converts had attained under his preaching in the capital of Asia" (Stalker).

Note that the work in Ephesus had been begun by Paul at the end of his second missionary journey, xviii. 18-21, and was continued during his absence by Aquila and Priscilla with the help of Apollos, xviii. 24-26. Consider carefully all the people mentioned in chap. xix—the isolated company of twelve Christian; Paul's friends—Timothy, Erastus, Aristarchus and certain of the chief of Asia, xix. 31; the Jews—Sceva and his seven sons, Alexander; the Ephesians—Tyrannus, Demetrius and the town clerk. Note Paul's methods of work in Ephesus, xix. 8, 9, 11, 12. It was

probably during his stay here that the First Epistle to the Corinthians was written.

Aim of this Lesson

To increase the children's enthusiasm over the spread of Christianity.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who were Paul's companions on his first missionary journey? (Barnabas all the way, John Mark part way.) And on the second? (Silas, Timothy, Luke.)

From Antioch to Ephesus—The third time he apparently started out alone—think how lonely he must have been. Explain that the men who had travelled with him had been left behind in different places to help the new Christians. And this time he turned in the same direction as he had done the second time. Do the children remember where he went to first on the first journey? (Cyprus) And on the second? (Iarsus and the country round there.) So now also he went northward and then west. Can the children recall the names of any other places he would come to there? (Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, Antioch in Pisidia.) Think how glad the Christians in these places must have been to see him again. But always he said he could not stay, for there were other places where he had not yet told of Jesus. And all the time he had in mind the great city of Ephesus (show map) where he had been once before but only for a very short time.

Preaching in Ephesus—When Paul reached Ephesus he no doubt went first of all to the house of some great friends of his who were living there, Aquila and Priscilla. And then without any delay he began his work in Ephesus. What was Paul's usual way of beginning work in a new city? (Preaching in the synagogue to the Jews.) Tell what he did here (xix. 8). But at last the Jews began to object and argue and make the work difficult, so Paul had to hire a college hall in the city for his meetings, and there every day crowds gathered for discussion and preaching (xix. 9). Tell how long this continued and describe Paul's special gift of healing (xix. 10-12),

A Fire at Ephesus—By this time a great many people in Ephesus had become Christians. We read of one congregation meeting in the house of Aquila (1 Cor. xvi. 19) and still others were meeting in the college hall. Tell how many of the Ephesians believed in magic and read books on magic, fortune-telling and superstitious things like that. But the Christians began to feel that all these things were false and wrong, and when some one suggested that they should burn all their books of magic, they at once felt that was the right thing to do. Describe the great fire, probably in the market place, where many people kept bringing books and throwing them on to the flames (xix. 19).

A Riot in Ephesus—All these things made the Ephesian people who still worshipped idols rather frightened. They began to think all the city would soon be Christian. And the men who made the idols and sold them were most frightened of all. Describe the meeting of silversmiths to consider the situation (xix. 24) and read what Demetrius said, xix. 25-27. Describe the way they shouted—tell what they said, (xix. 28) and picture the excitement spreading through the city. Everybody took up the shout of the idolmakers—nobody knew why they were shouting so (xix. 32) but in the midst of the uproar two of Paul's friends were caught and dragged like prisoners to the theatre and the crowd surged into the building with them (xix. 29). Tell how Paul tried to go to the rescue but was dissuaded (xix. 30, 31). Then one of the non-Christian Jews got into the theatre and tried to speak but no one would listen (xix. 33, 34). For two hours they shouted in the theatre till they were all tired out—help the children to realise what a terrible uproar there was—and it was only then that the town clerk managed to make the people listen to him. Read what he said, xix. 35-40. How wise he was—and how foolish all the crowd must have felt. But Paul saw that it was now time for him to go on to other places—for nearly three years he had been in Ephesus, there were many Christians there now, and everybody in the city knew something about this new religion—so, after a last meeting with his friends, he went on again to find new places in which to tell about Jesus.

LESSON 16

TIED HANDS AND FEET

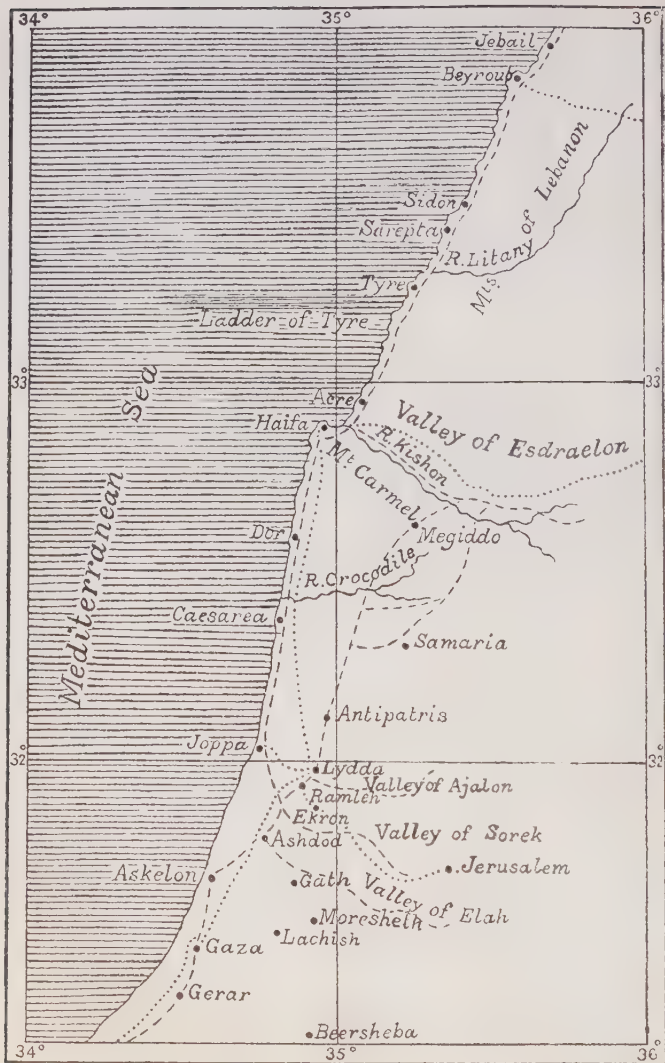
Acts xx. 16-24, 36-38 ; xxi. 1-34 ; xxiii

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

The last stage of Paul's third missionary journey is told in great detail by Luke, who again joined the apostle in Greece. Note the rest of the company who joined Paul and Luke at Troas, xx. 4, 5. One reason for Paul's great desire to go to Jerusalem at this time, xx. 16, was the fact that he was carrying the money contributed in Macedonia, 2 Cor. viii. 1, 2, for the poor Christians in Jerusalem, xxiv. 17. Note that it was Jews again who stirred up the opposition in Greece, making it necessary for him suddenly to change his plans and leave his companions to sail direct to Troas while he went on foot through Macedonia. Carefully trace the route on the map considering the events described in Greece, Philippi, Troas, Assos, Miletus, Patara, Tyre, Ptolemais, Cæsarea. Besides the Christians from Ephesus whom he met at Miletus, he met brethren also in Tyre, Ptolemais and Cæsarea. Consider who the latter would be, xxi. 8-10 ; x. 24.

Read xx. 23 and xxi. 10-14. "In city after city the persons in the Christian community who were endowed with the gift of prophecy foretold that bonds and imprisonment were awaiting him, and, as he came nearer to the close of his journey, these warnings became more loud and frequent. He felt their solemnity ; his was a brave heart, but it was too humble and reverent not to be overawed with the thought of death and judgment. He had several companions with him, but he sought opportunities of being alone. He parted from his converts as a dying man, telling them that they would see his face no more. But when they entreated him to turn back and avoid the threatened danger he gently pushed aside their loving arms . . . He must by this time have been nearly sixty years of age ; and for twenty years he had been engaged in almost superhuman labours. He had been

SKETCH MAP OF THE MARITIME PLAIN



Roads -----
Railway

travelling and preaching incessantly and carrying on his heart a crushing weight of cares. His body had been worn with disease and mangled with punishments and abuse; his hair must have been whitened, and his face furrowed with the lines of age. As yet, however, there were no signs of his body breaking down, and his spirit was still as keen as ever in its enthusiasm for the Service of Christ."

For a full understanding of the reason of Paul's arrest it is necessary to consider the great controversy which threatened to disrupt the church in his day. It was over the question of Gentile converts. Peter's vision at Joppa and subsequent experiences at Cæsarea ought to have settled the question once for all. And so it did in the minds of the apostles, xv. 13-29, but "it fills us with amazement to discover that even this settlement was not final. It would appear that, even at the time when it was come to, it was fiercely opposed by some who were present at the meeting where it was discussed; and, although the authority of the apostles determined the official note which was sent to the distant churches, the Christian community at Jerusalem was agitated with storms of angry opposition to it, Nor did the opposition soon die down. On the contrary, it waxed stronger and stronger. It was fed from abundant sources. Fierce national pride and prejudice sustained it; probably it was nourished by self-interest, because the Jewish Christians would live on easier terms with the non-Christian Jews the less the difference between them was understood to be; religious conviction, rapidly warming into fanaticism, strengthened it; and very soon it was re-inforced by all the rancour of hatred and the zeal of propagandism. For to such a height did this opposition rise that the party which was inflamed with it at length resolved to send out propagandists to visit the Gentile churches one by one and, in contradiction to the official apostolic rescript, warn them that they were imperilling their souls by omitting circumcision, and could not enjoy the privileges of true Christianity unless they kept the Jewish law" (Stalker). Thus it came about that Paul was looked upon by non-Christian Jews as the one man who was subverting their national religion and customs. Although he regarded as so absolutely immaterial the keeping of the

Jewish law. Gal. v. 6, yet for the sake of others he was willing to follow James' advice at Jerusalem on this occasion and identify himself with and bear the expenses of four men who had taken a vow, xxi. 20-26. It was the Jews from Asia, xxi. 27, who started the cry against him—doubtless some who had witnessed his work in Ephesus—note the slender evidence they had against him, xxi. 29. It was only the proximity of the Tower of Antonia with its Roman guard, which overlooked the Temple court, that saved his life at this point. Consider Claudias Lysias, the chief captain, and his action all through, xxi. 31-40; xxii. 24-28; xxxiii. 18-25. Paul's address from the stairs to the mob in the Temple court, xxii. 1-21, should be carefully read by the teacher, noting that it was the mention again of Gentiles which roused a storm of opposition.

Aim of this Lesson

To show how zeal for Christ casts out fear.

Story for the Class

Introduction—In which great city did we hear last week of Paul preaching? (Ephesus) Why did he leave? (Because of a riot) (On a small map held in the hand the teacher should trace Paul's route as the story proceeds.)

At Miletus—Briefly tell how from Ephesus Paul went for a very short visit to Europe again. There, one by one, quite a party joined him—Timothy and Luke were amongst them and six others. All were going to the feast at Jerusalem and most of the way they could travel by boat, calling at several places on the way. One place Paul wanted to go to was Ephesus, but the boat could not go there and the nearest place they stopped at was Miletus. Tell what Paul did there (xx. 17). Picture them coming and Paul meeting them. Let the children read part of his address to them, xx. 18-26, specially emphasizing verses 23 and 25. Vividly describe their parting (xx. 36-38).

At Cæsarea—Trace on the map the remainder of the voyage to Ptolemais, describing the change of ship at Patara (xxi. 1, 2); how they spent a week at Tyre (xxi. 3-6); and one day

at Ptolemais (xxi. 7). That was the end of their sea voyage and the next day they started walking the 50 miles down the coast to Cæsarea. Evidently they had had a good voyage and reached Cæsarea quite early, for they had some time to wait there before the feast at Jerusalem. Tell of the visit of the Prophet Agabus while they were there (xxi. 10). Vividly describe his parable in action and read what he said to Paul, xxi. 11. Evidently some terrible thing was likely to happen in Jerusalem. Picture the sorrow of Paul's friends and how they tried to persuade him not to go (xxi. 12). Read Paul's reply and their response, xxi. 13, 14. Show that it was Paul's zeal for the Gospel that made him so fearless even of death.

At the Feast—So they started away from Cæsarea with a number of the Christians of that place also with them. Picture them going together the 50 miles march to Jerusalem. Describe Paul's welcome by the leading Christians (xxi. 17-19). No doubt he and his companions handed over at this time the money that had been entrusted to them—money which had been collected in Europe and Asia Minor for the poor Christians at Jerusalem. But because of the prejudices of the non-Christian Jews, who did not like the Christian Jews mixing so freely with Christians of other nations, the apostles asked Paul to share in a vow taken by four other men, which would show everyone that he was a true Jew (xxi. 20-24). Tell how Paul did so and for six days of the feast was in and out of the Temple amongst the other worshippers who all saw that he was careful to observe all the right ceremonies.

Mobbed—But, alas, on the seventh day came the event that Paul had been warned of in Cæsarea. It happened that amongst those attending the feast were some Jews from Ephesus who knew all about Paul's work and the Gentile Christians there. They had recognised him in Jerusalem with one of his Ephesian friends (xxi. 29) and on this day they saw Paul in the Temple. At once they jumped to the conclusion that his Gentile friend was in the Temple too, and they started a cry against him. Read what they shouted, xxi. 28. That was a most terrible accusation to make and a fearful commotion followed. Describe vividly how the angry

mob collected and dragged Paul out of the Temple court to kill him in the street, shutting the Temple gate behind him (xxi. 30).

Arrested—Fortunately, from the Roman barracks overlooking the Temple court, the soldiers saw the rioting and the captain at once gave orders to the soldiers to go and restore peace. They ran down to find the crowd beating Paul, so concluded he must be a very dangerous man. Describe how he was chained (xxi. 33) and the tumult that followed (xxi. 34). The Roman Captain quite failed to understand anything, so marched his prisoner away into the barracks—describe the violence of the mob, now so angry because they had lost their prey (xxi. 35). Tell the favour Paul asked and was granted (xxi. 39), and picture him standing on the stairs addressing the seething crowd below. Briefly tell how he told them of his conversion and that God sent him to preach to the Gentiles. Picture the tumult that arose again at that word (xxii. 22, 23), and describe how the officer proceeded to examine the prisoner in private (xxii. 24). Tell how Paul's Roman citizenship helped him again (xxii. 25-29).

Saved—For two days Paul was kept in prison there, and then a visitor was allowed to see him—tell who this was (xxiii. 16) and what news he brought (xxiii. 12-15). Tell what Paul did (xxiii. 17) and picture the young man telling his story to the captain (xxiii. 18-22). "I will send this troublesome prisoner to the Governor at Cæsarea," said the captain to himself, and at once gave orders for an escort to be prepared. Describe this (xxiii. 23, 24). While they got ready the captain wrote a letter to the Governor, and then Paul was taken out of the city by night and back to Cæsarea with an escort of soldiers that would have kept anyone safe. So the predictions of Agabus had come true, but God had taken care of Paul, and now his enemies could not get at him.

LESSON 17

IN PERILS OF WATERS

Acts xxvii. 1-44

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

The teacher should read also chapters xxiv, xxv and xxvi dealing with Paul's trial at Cæsarea. "After Paul's imprisonment had lasted for two years, Felix was succeeded in the government of Palestine by Festus. The Jews had never ceased to intrigue to get Paul into their hands, and they at once assailed the new ruler with further importunities. As Festus seemed to be wavering, Paul availed himself of his privilege of appeal as a Roman citizen and demanded to be sent to Rome and tried at the bar of the emperor. This could not be refused him; and a prisoner had to be sent to Rome at once after such an appeal was taken. Very soon therefore, Paul was shipped off under the charge of Roman soldiers and in the company of many other prisoners on their way to the same destination. The journal of the voyage has been preserved in the Acts of the Apostles and is acknowledged to be the most valuable document in existence concerning the seamanship of ancient times. It is also a precious document of Paul's life; for it shows how his character shone out in a novel situation. A ship is a kind of miniature of the world. It is a floating island in which there are the government and the governed. But the government is, like that of states, liable to sudden social upheavals, in which the ablest man is thrown to the top. This was a voyage of extreme perils, which required the utmost presence of mind and power of winning the confidence and obedience of those on board. Before it was ended Paul was virtually both captain of the ship and the general of the soldiers; and all on board owed their lives to him" (Stalker).

On a map trace the route followed to Melita, xxviii. 1. Note that they had to tranship at Myra, xxvii. 5, 6, evidently on to a larger vessel—see the number of people on board, xxvii. 37. Consider the centurion, Julius, xxvii. 1; compare

him with Cornelius, x. 1. That Luke was with Paul at this time is denoted by the first personal pronoun again, also Aristarchus, xxvii. 2. Probably the only capacity in which these men could travel with such a company was as slaves of some important prisoner, which indicates the depth of their devotion to Paul. See how carefully the events of each day are recorded—this chapter and the account of the voyage from Troas to Cæsarea suggest that Luke must have been a lover of the sea. The Fast, xxvii. 9, was the Jewish Day of Atonement which came in the autumn.

Aim of this Lesson

To stimulate the children's admiration for Paul's bravery and unselfishness and loyalty to God.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the fact that Paul had been made a prisoner by the Romans. But were the Romans his enemies? (No, the Jews.) Remind the children that his arrest saved his life. Where was he sent for safety? (Cæsarea).

The Appeal—For two long years he was kept in prison there while the Jews kept trying to persuade the Governor to send him to Jerusalem again where they might be able to kill him. This gave Paul time to rest after his hard work, and no doubt the Christians in Cæsarea visited him often. At the end of two years a new governor came and the Jews nearly persuaded him to send the prisoner to Jerusalem, when Paul did something that surprised everyone. Only Roman citizens could do this, but Paul had that honour. Tell how he appealed to the Emperor at Rome and demanded that they send him there for trial. Think how chagrined the Jews were.

Starting on a Voyage—Picture the bustle of preparation. A number of prisoners were being sent under the care of an officer named Julius. Think how the Christians parted from Paul. But tell how two of them would not leave him—Luke and Aristarchus determined to travel as his servants so as to be with him to help and comfort him. Describe the long line of prisoners being taken in chains on to the boat—the

boat sailing away from shore. Tell of the stop at Sidon next day (xxvii. 3) and of Julius' kindness to Paul. From there the voyage was very pleasant till they came to Myra—show map. Imagine Paul's feelings and thoughts—out on the sea again where he had so often been before—sailing near so many places he had been in to preach—on his way to Rome.

Changing Ships—From Myra the ship was going in a wrong direction for the officer and his prisoners, so he had to look for another. Tell how he found one from Africa taking wheat to Italy (xxvii. 6, 38). This was the country to which they wanted to go—imagine the scene of bustle and confusion on the wharf as all the prisoners were put on to the new boat. Trace their course to Crete—a slow voyage because the wind was in the wrong direction.

In Crete—As the wind hindered them so much they had to stop at the first harbour they came to, but it was a very poor one. Explain the captain's dilemma—it would be dangerous to stay there for the winter, but it was so late in the year that the bad weather might begin any day and then they would be in danger if they had started. Read what Paul said, xxvii. 10. How surprising that they would let a prisoner speak so, but evidently they all realised that Paul was an unusual kind of prisoner. How did he know more than the sailors? (God must have told him.) Tell of the discussion that followed, and the decision they came to, encouraged by the favourable wind (xxvii. 11–13). Picture them sailing away hoping next day to reach a better harbour.

The Storm—But, alas, hardly had they started when the wind changed. Not being a steamer the ship could only go where the wind blew it and it was taken right away from land and nowhere near the good harbour! There was a little boat tied on behind and they were afraid it would be lost, so with great difficulty they pulled it up on board and then tied ropes all round their ship for fear it should fall to pieces (xxvii. 14–17). Tell what they did the second day (xxvii. 18), and the third (xxvii. 19). See that the children appreciate their helpless condition, absolutely at the mercy of this tremendous wind and the waves, which were nearly breaking the ship to pieces. Describe the 14 days of storm—no sun, no food, no hope.

The Wreck—Among these frightened people only Paul was calm. Near the end of the time he one day spoke to them all together. Read what he said, xxvii. 21-26—they were to be wrecked but not drowned—and note that Paul had been praying for everybody, not only for himself. On the fourteenth night the different sound of the waves showed they were near land. This was very terrible in the darkness, for if they were driven on to the rocks by the wind the boat would be smashed up and they would certainly all be drowned. Tell what they did to avoid being driven on the rocks in the darkness (xxvii. 27-29). Tell how the sailors tried to escape and were prevented (xxvii. 30-32). Read xxvii. 33-36. Describe vividly what happened in the morning (xxvii. 39-44). How everybody must have admired Paul for his courage all through that terrible time, and for the way in which he had thought of other people and tried to help them. They must all have honoured him as the one who had saved their lives.

LESSON 18

FAITHFUL UNTO DEATH

Acts xxviii. 11-16, 30, 31; 2 Tim. iv. 6-17

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

The shipwrecked party spent the rest of the winter on Melita or Malta. Trace the remainder of the voyage to Italy, and the walk from Puteoli to the imperial city, xxviii. 11-15. From Puteoli to Rome is about 100 miles. The week's halt in the former place would give ample time for communication with the Christians in Rome thus enabling them to meet the party at Appii Forum rather more than half way. Being unable to go to the synagogue as was his custom he called some of his fellow-countrymen to meet him in his prison—carefully study their conversation, xxviii. 17-29. Consider the influences which led to Paul being allowed so much freedom, xxviii. 16, 30.

“For many years Paul had been looking forward to seeing Rome, but he had always thought of entering it in a very different guise from that which now he wore. He had always thought of Rome as a successful general thinks of the central stronghold of the country he is subduing, who looks eagerly forward to the day when he will direct the charge against its gates. Paul was engaged in the conquest of the world for Christ, and Rome was the final position he had hoped to carry in his Master’s name. Years ago he had sent to it the famous challenge, ‘I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also ; for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth.’ But now when he found himself actually at its gates and thought of the abject condition in which he was—an old, gray-haired, broken man, a chained prisoner just escaped from shipwreck—his heart sank within him, and he felt dreadfully alone. At the right moment, however, a little incident took place which restored him to himself ; at a small town forty miles out of Rome he was met by a little band of Christian brethren, who, hearing of his approach, had come out to welcome him ; and . . . farther on, he came upon another group, who had come out for the same purpose. Self-reliant as he was, he was exceedingly sensitive to human sympathy, and the sight of these brethren and their interest in him completely revived him. He thanked God and took courage ; his old feelings came back in their wonted strength ; and when, in the company of these friends, he reached that shoulder of the Alban Hills from which the first view of the city is obtained, his heart swelled with the anticipation of victory ; for he knew that he carried in his breast the force which would yet lead captive that proud capital.

“The Book of Acts suddenly breaks off with a brief summary of Paul’s two years’ imprisonment at Rome. Is this because there was no more to tell ? When his trial came on did it issue in his condemnation and death ? Or did he get out of prison and resume his old occupations ? Where Luke’s lucid narrative so suddenly deserts us, tradition comes in proffering its doubtful aid. It tells us that he was acquitted on his trial and let out of prison ; that he resumed his travels, visiting Spain among other places ; but

before long he was arrested again and sent back to Rome, where he died a martyr's death at the cruel hands of Nero. Happily, however, we are not altogether dependent on the precarious aid of tradition. We have writings of Paul's own undoubtedly subsequent to the two years of his first imprisonment. These are what are called the Pastoral Epistles—the Epistles to Timothy and Titus. In these we see that he regained his liberty and resumed his employment of revisiting his old churches and founding new ones. His footsteps cannot, indeed, be any longer traced with certainty" (Stalker). Look through the three Pastoral Epistles for references to places visited and note which of these are not mentioned in Paul's previous journeys. Up to the time of his first imprisonment the persecutions which Paul had experienced had been almost entirely from his own countrymen—the Roman Government as yet had no quarrel with him and his release was looked upon as a foregone conclusion. But the burning of Rome, wrongfully attributed to the Christians, marked the beginning of the official persecution right through the empire. And now nothing could save the man who was the leading figure in the Christian Church. He was again arrested and conducted to Rome, where, after a short time he was executed.

Aim of this Lesson

To show the glory of being faithful unto death.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers how many people were in that boat that was wrecked on Malta? (276). How many of their names do we know? (Paul, Luke, Aristarchus, Julius).

Three Months on Malta—Even if they had not lost their ship they could not have continued their journey—all of them now knew that Paul was right when he said it was too late in the season to go to sea. So they had to wait for the fine weather again—that was for three months. Recall the fact that they had lost everything, and imagine how they spent the time. There were other people also spending the winter on Malta. Tell of the boat, also from Egypt, which had been fortunate enough to reach there before the storm, and which

stayed there till the weather was good. The officer, Julius, managed to get a passage on this for all his prisoners and soldiers, and at last they were able to sail away again.

Malta to Rome—First they came to another island, Sicily, where they landed and spent three days while the sailors were unloading and loading cargo. Another day's sailing brought them to the first port in Italy, and two days later they landed at Puteoli. The voyage was ended. Tell of the week spent there with the Christians—was this another of Julius' kind acts to Paul?—and then they started on the 100 miles march to Rome. Picture the prisoners and their guard as day after day they tramped northward over the dusty road—were they glad to be there or did they wish they were back on the boat again? Think what Julius would do to make the way as easy as possible for Paul who had saved their lives on the wreck. But imagine Paul's feelings as he thus approached Rome a chained prisoner. Tell of the incident that cheered him at Appii Forum (xxviii. 15)—40 miles these men had walked to meet him and welcome him to Rome. At Three Taverns 10 miles from the city, another band met him, so he had an escort of Christian friends as well as Roman soldiers when he entered Rome. Picture the scene as Julius handed over his prisoners and secured special concession for Paul (xxviii. 16).

Living in Rome—In many places which Paul visited he came there as the first Christian preacher and no one had ever heard of Jesus before he came. But in Rome it was different, and now he had come amongst them as a prisoner awaiting trial, instead of as a great preacher and leader. Were they then afraid to associate with him, do you think, lest they also be suspected of some crime? Surely not, or they would not have walked all that long way to meet him when they knew he was on his way to the city. And we can imagine how often they would visit him in his home which was a prison, and perhaps bring him gifts to comfort him. What sort of gifts would they bring? And of course many of them would come to be taught by him, and prayer meetings would be held in his house. For two years Paul was kept thus a prisoner awaiting trial—and then the Bible tells us nothing more.

Released—But other writers, whose books are not part of

the Bible, have told us how when at last Paul was tried by the Emperor, he was released. Imagine his feelings, after 4 years in prison at Cæsarea and Rome, when he once more found himself free—no longer chained to a soldier—able to go where he liked. Where would he go first? Let the children freely discuss what he would most likely do, the teacher suggesting what he himself thinks most probable. Would he go to Jerusalem?—Antioch?—Tarsus?—Ephesus? We have indications that he went to some parts of Greece (1 Tim. i. 3), to Crete (Tit. i. 5), to Troas (2 Tim. iv. 13).

In Prison Again—But very soon some terrible news came from Rome—the city had been burnt and many thousands of people had perished. The worst of it was the fire was not an accident, but the Emperor, who was a very bad man, had done it on purpose, just because he wanted to watch the flames! How thankful Paul's friends must have been that he was no longer a prisoner there! But then, to save himself from blame, the Emperor said it was the Christians, who had set fire to the city. Imagine how angry every one was then with the Christians. At once fresh persecution broke out against them—the Emperor ordered the death of every Christian, not only in Rome, but all over the Empire. Years before there had been bad persecution in Jerusalem, and in many places Paul had been beaten or stoned or imprisoned—can the children recall any instances? But nothing so bad as this new persecution had ever happened before. In Rome itself crowds of people used to meet to see hungry lions fed with the Christian prisoners. Now Paul had to be very careful as he went from place to place and he must often have travelled secretly to prevent being caught again. How long he kept free we do not know, but finally he was caught again and again sent as a prisoner to Rome. Recall the conditions of his first imprisonment (xxviii. 30). But now he was thrown into a dungeon and nobody dared to visit him this time—perhaps most of his friends in Rome were already killed. But he did manage to get some one to take a letter for him to Timothy who was in Ephesus. In it he told Timothy about his condition. Read 2 Tim. iv. 9, 11–13, 16–19, helping the children to realise his loneliness and the hardships he was suffering in the dungeon. Notice

especially the only friend who was now able to stay with him and the two he wanted to come to him (verse 11). How wonderful that we can read that very letter to-day !

The End—How long Paul was kept in prison this time we have no idea, but he knew that release was now impossible. Read what he said to Timothy about this, 2 Tim. i. 12 and iv. 6-8. How brave of him to face thus what would probably be a violent death. And soon the end came. Somebody else has told that Timothy and Mark did come to him before he died, so he had three of his special friends with him then. Describe how he was led by the soldiers out of the city and there his head was cut off, and the three young men sorrowfully buried their old friend. Read impressively but without further comment, Heb. xii. 1.

STORIES OF GREAT MEN OF OLD

Aim

To present the stories of the men of old in just the same way as they were told to Jewish children ; viz., as illustrating courage and faith in God that inspired men to attempt great things in His name.

LESSON 19

THE CALL OF SAMUEL

1 Sam. iii. 1-21

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Find on the map Ramah, Samuel's birthplace and where he lived again later in life, i. 1 ; xix. 18 ; and Shiloh, 20 miles away where the tabernacle had been since the days of Joshua, i. 24 ; Josh. xviii. 1. Note that the sanctuary was no longer a tent but a more substantial building with doors, iii. 15.

"The story is not that of a *little* child as is so often represented. Samuel had 'grown before the Lord,' and performed his child's ministry faithfully, and now the time of crisis came when God was able to speak directly to his awakened spirit. Consider how Samuel's awakening came in the line of the common service, what if he had not answered *Eli's voice* that night? Teachers should search out other references to God speaking with man. He spoke to Abraham and Jacob at times of crisis ; to Moses He spoke continually for forty years. We read of sixteen Divine communications to Joshua. But after that His messages came at scattered times through many voices, and when Samuel arose, there had been a long time without a recognised Messenger to the

SKETCH MAP OF SAMARIA AND JUDAH



Roads -----
 Railway

people. Study the details of the tabernacle arrangements as indicated here. Samuel's room was near enough to Eli's to hear his voice, and probably also in sight of the holy lamp. See Exod. xxvii. 20, 21 and Lev. xxiv. 1-4 for the holy oil and instructions about the lamps" (Huntley). See also Exod. xxxvii. 17-24. Samuel's call evidently came just before daylight, iii. 3.

"When God came near His young servant, it seemed as though *He placed His seal upon his faithfulness*. Hitherto but small services had been required of him. . . . It was meet that he who had shown himself faithful in a very little should have a larger and wider sphere assigned to him. . . . Eli *was very wise in his treatment of the lad*. He might have posed as the sole depository of the Divine secrets, might have warned the lad against listening to vain delusions, might have given way to ungovernable jealousy and suspicion, might have stood on the dignity and pride of office. But instead of any of these, without the slightest trace of hurt pride, he took the boy's hand in his, and, so to speak, led him into the Divine Presence, knowing full well that the seals of sacred office, which had been taken from himself, were about to be laid on those youthful palms" (Meyer).

Aim of this Lesson

To impress the children with the idea that it is a privilege to be called to God's service.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers the name of the woman who prayed so earnestly for a son? When her prayer was answered what name did she give to her boy? What vow did she make?

Preparing for his life work—Now to fulfil this vow she would have to take her boy to the little old tent-church which the people had made while they were wandering in the wilderness with Moses—do the children remember? It had been mended so many times that perhaps very little of the old building was left, but it was not much different in looks than it had been. Imagine how Hannah often talked to him

about it at home and told him the story of how it had been built. She would speak of his going there not as a hard parting, much as she would feel that, but as a great privilege. He was perhaps 10 years of age, old enough to look after himself and help in the church, when the time came for him to go. Imagine the excitement of preparation and of the journey, and the thrill of interest when at last he saw the old but sacred building.

Living at Shiloh—Picture vividly his meeting with the venerable old priest—read Hannah's words to Eli, i. 26–28—and imagine the boy's feelings of awe and reverence as he was led into the sanctuary. The old man loved him at once and Hannah felt he was in good hands as she left him. Now describe those with whom he was associated—Eli, old, saintly, going blind—Eli's two sons who helped in the work of the church but had no interest in spiritual things, and in fact were bad men setting a bad example to all who came there to worship. Would Samuel choose to be like them or their father? Describe his dress and the work he soon learnt to do. Dwell upon the word "ministered" (ii. 18; iii. 1) picturing his faithful service in these small things as 5 or 6 years went by. Tell of his mother's annual visit.

Called by God—Picture the boy, now 15 or 16 years of age, retiring one night after finishing his duties. He slept quite near Eli, perhaps only a curtain between, and may be the old man not infrequently called him up in the night. So, when towards morning, Samuel heard himself called, he was in no way startled but quickly jumped up and ran to Eli. Read iii. 5, and imagine how puzzled he was—had he been dreaming?—or was Eli talking in his sleep? But he had not had time to go to sleep when the voice called again—"Samuel." It was just like Eli's voice—there must be something the matter with the old man—and again Samuel went to see. Tell what Eli said again (iii. 6). Describe over again how Samuel lay down, what he thought, how the voice came again. What should he do this time? Eli said he did not want him so what was the good of going again? But there might be something the matter and he always did go when Eli called, so forgetting his own comfort, he went again. Tell what Eli now realised (iii. 8) and read what he said,

iii. 9. Imagine the boy's feelings now. How anxiously he listened for the voice—would God call again? Did he lie down again or did he kneel in prayer? And God did call again—read what He said and Samuel's eager answer, iii. 10. Briefly tell God's message—"Eli's sons must be punished—there must be another successor for Eli."

Delivering the Message—It was nearly morning now—Samuel lay thinking till time to get up. Describe his work (iii. 15). Read iii. 16-18. Eli realised at once, and soon everyone else knew, that Samuel was the one chosen to be the next priest. Shall we all seek to so live that God can call us to His service as He called Samuel?

LESSON 20

SAMUEL THE PROPHET-LEADER

1 Sam. vii. 3-17; xii. 1-5

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Although Samuel was, after Moses, the great maker of the Hebrew nation, surprisingly little detail is given of his life—we do not even know the length of it. Chapters iv. 1-vii. 14 may cover a period of 40 years, see vii. 2. Study the outline of his life, iii. 21; iv. 1; vii. 3, 5, 9, 15-17; xii. 3-5. His great failure was in his own family, viii. 1-5.

"Samuel knew that there were two objects which must be realised before Israel's sad condition could be remedied or the Divine idea realised. First; the national unity must be recovered from the anarchy in which it had been overwhelmed. It was useless to think of holding the land against the inroads of the neighbouring people so long as each tribe was content with an isolated existence, repelling its own enemies for a time, but indifferent to the condition of its neighbours and of the country at large. Israel must be one, animated by a common enthusiasm for its future independence and integrity . . . Secondly; the evils that had eaten into the nation's heart must be put away. The people had forsaken

the God of their fathers for the Phoenician and Philistine deities, whose images were worshipped in His stead. Shrines to Baal and Ashtoreth covered the land. Foul orgies of shameless impurity were everywhere rife. And it was evident that only a widespread revival of religion could save the people from rotting away before the very evils for which the ancient Canaanites had been destroyed " (Meyer).

Carefully read the record of the whole period and note that in both of these objects he was largely successful. Find on the map the places with which he was connected, iii. 21 ; vii. 16, 17 ; and note the two great gatherings at Mizpeh. Consider the " reasonableness of the request for a king. Why then was it sin? . . . It was a decline from the unique and separate calling of the nation. God had not failed in any emergency to provide a leader anointed with His Spirit ; but this demand showed failure of faith and the desire for a visible, in place of an invisible head. Note that God trained His people by *letting them choose*, through their entire history . . . Read carefully the charge in Deut. xvii. 14-20. The child's share in the story is not the generalisation of a nation's development or a nation's sin. It is rather the deeds and persons of Samuel and Saul and the sense that God, wonderful and wise, saw and directed the whole " (Huntley).

Aim of this Lesson

To portray to the children a noble character.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Why was Samuel called by God and not one of Eli's sons?

The Chosen Leader—How long a time went by after Samuel's call we do not know, but he lived on at Shiloh with old Eli till he was a man, known and loved and respected by all the people. The next event we read about was a very sad one. Briefly describe the defeat of Israel at Aphek and the loss of their wonderful treasure-chest (iv. 1-11). Picture the arrival of the messenger at Shiloh and the tragic result when he told his story (iv. 12-18). And from that day everybody looked to Samuel as the nation's leader. He was not a priest

like Eli, but he received messages from God which he always obeyed and passed them on to the people. (There will be no time to include here an account of the fortunes of the ark in the Philistine country, but the children might be encouraged to read for themselves the strange story in chapters v. and vi.)

The Judge—Apparently from the time that the ark was captured. Shiloh was deserted and Samuel now went back to his old home at Ramah. Describe how from there he made periodical circuits through the district, something like a Collector does in India. He settled disputes and saw that justice was done everywhere, and all the time tried to make the people realise two things—that if they were to be strong they must be united, all ready to help each other, and they must all turn to God and worship Him.

The Prophet—Many years went by and we are only told of one event but that shows how successful Samuel was. Very vividly tell of the great united gathering at Mizpeh (vii. 3-6), and the defeat of the Philistines which immediately followed (vii. 7-13). As a summing up of his life read Samuel's words to the people and their reply, xii. 3-5. Imagine what it would be like if all the officials in your district were like Samuel. How can we help to realise such a vision?

LESSON 21

SAUL THE FARMER'S SON

1 Sam. ix and x.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Saul's character is very obscure. "But, unhappily, the obscurity, begins further back than Saul. The obscurity begins with Saul's father and mother. We never hear of Saul's mother; but what kind of a father can Kish have been? We know all about Samuel. There is no obscurity about Samuel. All Israel from Dan to Beersheba, knew that

Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord ; all Israel but Kish and his son Saul. . . . Kish the father, and Saul the son were so busy breeding asses that they made light of Samuel and would not come. Samuel was an old man by this time. Samuel had grown grey in a service that made all Israel acknowledge and know God from the one end of the land to the other ; but Saul all the time did not know Samuel when he saw him. 'Tell me, I pray thee,' said Saul to a stranger he met on his way when he was in despair about his father's lost asses, 'where is the Seer's house.' 'I am the Seer myself,' said Samuel. 'Come with me, and I will tell thee all that is in thine heart.' Yes ; there is some quite inexplicable obscurity about Kish as well as about Saul ; an obscurity that perplexes us and throws us out at the very opening of his son's sad history. . . But Saul's servant knew Samuel and Saul was led to the door of his earthly kingdom by the piety of his father's servant. . . After Samuel had anointed Saul to the kingdom, we come upon this very obscure Scripture : 'And it was so that when Saul had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave Saul another heart, and the Spirit of God came upon Saul and he prophesied.' Saul, you exclaim, a prophet ! Saul with 'another heart !' Saul with the Spirit of God upon him ! You cannot understand. No. But words must be read in the light of facts ; and Bible words in the light of Bible facts. Profession must be judged by practice, and faith shown by works. And 'another heart' judged what it is by what comes out of it. Nay, prophecy itself is only a sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal if the prophet has not charity. 'Another heart' has more meanings than one in Holy Scripture and so has the Spirit of God ; and so has prophecy . . . (A commentator) makes clear to us all the obscurity of Saul's 'other heart.' 'Saul has no longer the heart of a husbandman, concerned only with corn and cattle ; he has the heart of a statesman, a general, a prince. When God calls to service He will make fit for it. If He advances to another station, He will give another heart ; and will preserve that heart to those who sincerely desire to serve Him.' So He will. But that is just what Saul . . . did not sincerely desire to do. And here hangs the true key to the whole of Saul's sad

history. He was elected and crowned king over Israel, but he was as ignorant all the time of the God of Israel, as he was of Samuel, the great prophet of the God of Israel. The Spirit of God came upon him for outward and earthly acts, but never for an inward change of heart. Saul prophesied, whatever that may mean; what he said has not been thought worthy of preservation; but after he had so prophesied he relapsed and remained the same man he had been before. . . In his youth he had not one spark of insight or interest in the religious life and worship of Israel. He had never heard of Samuel. What he could not but hear he immediately forgot. When his sin found him out, and when salvation was at his very door, the poor graceless castaway had no higher request to make of Samuel than this: 'Honour me, I pray, before the people.' No. Saul the anointed king of Israel had all the time neither part nor lot in the true kingdom of God. At the same time, in giving Saul another heart, the God of Israel gave Saul the greatest opportunity of his life to make himself a new heart. God suddenly made a break in the ungodly and heathenish life of the son of Kish. So much so that Saul for the moment was almost persuaded to become an Israelite indeed. Saul all his days was never so near the Kingdom of Heaven as when he said to Samuel. 'Am not I a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes as Israel, and my family the least of all the families of Benjamin? Wherefore, then, speakest thou so to me?' That is the language of the man whose heart is really touched for the time with divine grace. That is real humility; and humility is the root of all the graces, both natural and supernatural. And had Saul only dwelt on that thought; had he returned all his days to that thought; that thought dwelt upon and added to at every new occasion and fresh proof of God's goodness and his own ill deserts—that would soon have made Saul's heart a new heart that would soon have made Saul another man. But it was not to be so with Saul. As time went on, and as trials and temptations beset Saul, a hard and stony heart, a spirit of rebellion, and pride, and envy, and jealousy, and despair took possession of Saul, and held possession of Saul to his terrible end. . . Had Saul's change of heart only held, had his conversion only become complete, Saul would have been

one of the greatest of all the Old Testament men. Saul was not a common man. He was a choice young man, and a goodly; there was not among the children of Israel a goodlier person than he; from his shoulders upward he was higher than any of the people. . . . After God gave Saul another heart his life was full for a time of finest promise. What could have promised better than his strict silence to his inquiring uncle about his anointing by Samuel? Where a weaker man would have had his head turned and his tongue loosed, Saul told his uncle the stray asses were found; but of the matter of the kingdom he was strictly silent. We are bound to put a good construction on Saul's silence in that matter. It is but fair and just to set Saul's silence that day down to humility and modesty. As also when he hid himself among the stuff on the day of his election. As also when he held his peace at the men of Belial mocking at his election. As also after his first victory. Bring the men who say, Shall Saul rule over us, said the people, and put them to death this day. But Saul said, There shall not a man be put to death this day, for to-day the Lord hath wrought salvation in Israel. If all that is not to be set down to Saul's humility, self-command and magnanimity, not to say piety, then Saul's character is obscure indeed. We would have had no hesitation in setting all that down to the best motives had it not been that all his future so terribly belied all such modesty humility, self command, magnanimity, and piety. . . . And the more we work on Saul. . . . the more we feel the obscurity and the mystery of Saul's dark character" (Whyte).

Aim of this Lesson

To show the sort of man whom God can choose.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers the name of Samuel's home? (Ramah) Not far from Ramah was a place called Gibeah, and a farmer lived there about whom we shall hear to-day.

Seeking Asses—Tell of Kish, a farmer of good position, possessing flocks and herds, and describe his son, Saul (ix. 2

Tell of their loss and picture the young man and his servant wandering up and down the land seeking for the strayed animals (ix. 3-5). Imagine their sorrow when they failed to find any trace of them.

Meeting Samuel—Read the conversation between the two men, ix. 5-8, 10. Picture them approaching the town meeting the girls going for water, enquiring for the Prophet (ix. 11-13). As they entered the city they saw an old man coming along the street in front of them. Now most of the people in the land would have recognised at once that this was Samuel, but Saul did not know him. But he went and spoke to him. Read what he said and Samuel's reply, ix. 18-20. Which was the most surprising thing Samuel said?—before Saul told him about the asses being lost he said they were found, and then he said everybody was looking to Saul for something. Saul was evidently most surprised at what was said about himself—read ix. 21. Without telling Saul what he meant Samuel took the young man into his house. Tell of the meal and of the conversation on the housetop which followed (ix. 22-25). Samuel did not even then tell Saul all he was thinking about—perhaps he wanted to pray to God about it again that night—but in the morning he had another private talk with Saul (ix. 26, 27). Picture vividly what Samuel did while they were alone (x. 1).

Prophecy—Let older scholars read Samuel's parting words, x. 2-8, to younger ones tell the gist, and imagine what Saul felt and thought about as he went on. Tell how it happened just as Samuel had said (x. 9-13) and explain that in this way God was calling Saul not only to be king over His people, but to be a truly religious man leading the people to love and serve God. Describe Saul's return home (x. 14-16). Why did he not tell his uncle that Samuel had chosen him for king? Point out how his humility is indicated by this and by the fact that he went on with his ordinary work again just as before.

Elected King—It was not very long after this that a message from Samuel came to Saul and to everybody else in the land—all were called to meet Samuel at Mizpeh, a place quite near his home and Saul's home (x. 17). Do the children remember when he had done this before? (vii. 5). Picture

the great gathering and tell what Samuel said (x. 18, 19). Vividly describe the election of Saul (x. 20-24). Imagine the joy and enthusiasm of the nation. Let the children tell what they like best about Saul.

LESSON 22

SAUL THE FIRST KING

1 Sam. xi and xv

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“The Story of Saul’s splendid start is full of old-world charm and has the freshness of youth. The king waiting for the call to service, has returned to his herds. He has not yet taken up his permanent state, but, like the judges, acts only when the mighty Spirit of God comes upon him for special service. It is interesting to note how the office of the judges lost its power and charm just in degree as it became a permanent state for the judge. Samuel’s judgeship was one of continuous service. Read the whole of Psalm lxxii. and note the large place given in this picture of the ideal king, to his championship of the needy. . . Fifty years before, the Ammonites had ravaged the open lands of Eastern Jordan, but were repulsed by Jephthah (Jud. x. 17 ; xi. 33). Now they practically held possession of all but the greater cities near the Jordan border. Jabesh-Gilead, on the heights opposite Beth-Shan, would be one of the strong centres of resistance but now the Ammonite army had it totally at its mercy. (See chap. xii. 12). Nahash was threatening the whole land, and his advance was one of the first causes of the demand for a king. . . What had happened after Saul’s splendid start to cause the rejection of himself and his line? It is the story of perhaps thirty years, and out of this long period only three typical events are recorded. In each Saul stands revealed as a man whom kingship had spoiled. For the simple faith of his early days he had substituted the despotism, ostentation

and scheming of a tyrant. His enquiries of the Lord follow, rather than precede, his planning ; he wants a god who will give him favourable oracles rather than One Whose will must direct the whole. At Gilgal (chap. xiii.) he failed in reverence and faith. To usurp Samuel's God-appointed priestly office was to show himself profane. In chap. xiv. we see him boastfully claiming Jonathan's victory as his, and ready to sacrifice army and son to his rash vow ; and in chap. xv. there was not only the failure to obey but the terrible determination to cling to the show of kingship when its Divine authority had been taken from him " (Huntley).

Aim of this Lesson

To show how failure to obey God spoils even so fine a man as Saul.

Story for the Class

Introduction—What was the name of the first king of Israel ? What was there remarkable about his appearance ?

The Challenge—Very soon after he had been chosen king he had an opportunity of showing whether he was fit for such a position. He had not been crowned or gone to live in a palace yet—he was still looking after his father's cattle like any other farmer. One day when he brought the cows home from the field he found everybody in the town weeping and wailing. Tell his question (xi. 5) and then imagine him listening to the story told by a messenger. 'Tell this story as the messenger told it (xi. 1-3). At once Saul realised that as he was the people's chosen leader he must help them. Describe what he did, his orders to the people, and how they responded (xi. 7, 8). Tell the message that was sent back to the besieged city (xi. 9). Briefly describe what happened next day (xi. 11).

Coronation—That made all the people so happy that they determined to have another big assembly and again declare their allegiance to King Saul. Tell how a message was sent to Samuel and he again called all the people together, this time to Gilgal (xi. 12-14). Vividly picture the proceedings

there as they worshipped God and again proclaimed Saul their king (xi. 15).

Disobedience—Two years went by and again there was war—this time with the Philistines. Describe the Philistine army (xiii. 5) and the panic of the Israelites (xiii. 6). Saul also had a big army (xiv. 52, xiii. 2), but his men were not so well armed as the Philistines (xiii. 22). Describe how they waited in Gilgal for Samuel to come and pray for them—how Saul usurped the priestly office—how Samuel arrived (xiii. 7–10). Read what Samuel said to Saul, xiii. 13, 14. And so Saul got no great victory over his enemies because he had grieved God.

Rejection—Although Samuel had said “Thy kingdom shall not continue,” it looks as though God gave Saul another chance of showing whether he would be obedient. Soon after this he was told to go and punish the Amalekites another of those troublesome nations. Samuel gave full details of what he was to do to them and said no one was to take anything that belonged to the enemies, all was to be destroyed (xv. 1–3). Tell how Saul gathered his army, went against these enemies and was victorious (xv. 4, 5, 7). Describe how, early next morning, Samuel was seen approaching and how Saul went and greeted him (xv. 13). Read xv. 13–26, helping the children as they read to realise Saul’s untruthfulness and unfairness trying to put the blame on to others, and the fact that it was unwillingness to obey God that had spoilt his life.

LESSON 23

JONATHAN THE PRINCE

1 Sam. xiii. 16–23 ; xiv. 1–23

For the Teacher’s Private Study and the Preparation Class

“Jonathan was the eldest son of Saul, and he was thus the heir-apparent to the throne of Israel. The crown prince was a young man of great mental gifts, and he was endowed

also with many most impressive moral qualities. Handsome and high-mettled, full of nerve and full of heart, Jonathan was the pride of the army and the darling of the common people. His comrades for his beauty of person and for his swiftness of foot, were wont to call him the Gazelle. In all that, the heir-apparent was the son of his royal father's early days. But the piety, the humility, the generosity, the absolutely Christ-like loyalty, tenderness, self-forgetfulness, and self-sacrifice of Jonathan—all that the son had drawn from some far higher source than from his fast-falling father Saul. But for his father's great and disastrous transgressions, Jonathan would soon have been the second king of Israel; second in succession to Saul, but second to no king that ever sat on a throne in those great qualities of mind and heart and character that give stability to a throne and add lustre to a crown" (Whyte).

We first read of Jonathan when Saul had reigned for two years, and he was then in command of 1,000 men, xiii. 1, 2. Our lesson is concerned with his second victory over the Philistines. His first victory was in Geba, xiii. 3, a place probably not more than a mile or so to the north of Gibeah which was Saul's capital, and here it was just a Philistine outpost that was defeated. The enemy were not materially hindered in their advance into Israelite country, and were soon encamped in full force at Michmash further east still, xiii. 16. Find all these places on the map, also Ajalon, the pass on the west down which the Philistines were driven to their own country, xiv. 31. In the time of Abraham and Isaac friendly relations existed between them and the Philistines.

"Trace other references to trouble with the Philistines. After Samson's exploits they had their revenge at Aphek (chap. iv), but were defeated at Mizpeh (vii). In Saul's day they grew aggressive again, and troubled him continually to the day of his death. For over 100 years Israel was at war with them."

Aim of this Lesson

Jonathan will be the leading figure in three of our lessons and the aim will be to encourage emulation of so noble a

character. This week his bravery will be the outstanding virtue to emphasize.

Story for the Class

Introduction—What enemies did King Saul have to fight when he came to the throne? (Ammonites and Amalekites.) And he soon had Philistines to fight as well.

The Prince—But in all these wars he had one splendid helper—his eldest son, Jonathan. He was a great prince beloved by all the people. Tell how he commanded a section of the army (xiii. 2). Describe graphically the rival armies—the Isrealites (xiii. 19 22), and the Philistines (xiii. 5). Tell how the Philistines were in three companies and had penetrated right across the land of Israel by three different routes. Picture their two camps on either side of the wild gorge of Michmash.

The Attack—Tell of Jonathan's daring resolve (xiv. 1) and how he slipped away with his brave companion without the knowledge of Saul. Describe the part of the gorge that Jonathan chose to cross—by keeping further along the ravine than the usual path they might approach the enemy's camp unobserved. Picture them climbing down the steep cliffside to the depth below—it was a very narrow ravine with lofty sides. Apparently they reached the bottom safely and came into sight of a small outpost of the enemy camped on a flat place near the top of the cliff. Read Jonathan's brave words and the equally fine reply of his companion, xiv. 6, 7. Was the armour-bearer any less brave than his master? Tell of Jonathan's plan by which they might have a sign from God as to whether they should go up or return (xiv. 8-10). Describe what followed as they stepped out into full view of the Philistine sentries (xiv. 11), and read their challenge and Jonathan's words, xiv. 12. Picture these two young mountaineers climbing up as nimbly as a pair of goats. The Philistines evidently paid no attention to them, believing that the feat was impossible, and this probably accounts for the utter surprise by which they were taken as the two young men suddenly appeared among them. Imagine their consternation. Twenty of them fell there before the intrepid youths probably most of the small outpost (xiv. 13, 14), and the

remainder, if there were any left, fled to the main body. Tell of the terrific earthquake that came just at that moment and how the superstitious Philistines were seized with panic (xiv. 15). Both those in camp and those out foraging were terrified and all vied with each other in flight, beating each other down as they ran (xiv. 16).

The Pursuit—So much noise and commotion was there in the Philistine camp that Saul's camp on the opposite side heard it, and he at once called the roll to see if any of them were absent. Only Jonathan and his armour-bearer were missing (xiv. 17). Tell how Saul called the priest, Ahiah, to enquire of God, and then, without waiting for the answer, suddenly assembled his men and dashed off in pursuit of the flying Philistines (xiv. 18-20). It was a day long to be remembered for the unfortunate Philistines were beset on every side, even the Israelite deserters who were amongst them turning on them (xiv. 21, 22). Saul was a clever general and he saw the advantage of making the victory very thorough. Jonathan soon managed to get back amongst his own soldiers and together they drove the Philistines right back into their own country again. Everybody fought well and bravely when they saw their enemies running away, but it was the prince and his armour-bearer who did the bravest thing that day.

LESSON 24

DAVID THE CHAMPION

1 Sam. xvi. 1-13 ; xvii. 4-19, 32-50

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“ Trace the family of Jesse from Ruth ; and further, from Judah. See 1 Chron. ii. 1-16. The family was a chief one in Bethlehem : three of the elder sons belonged to Saul's army, the others may have superintended the barley lands as Boaz before them. David had charge of the flocks. . . .

“Remember that while there were still priests of Eli’s house, their full function was in abeyance while the Ark was at Kirjath-Jearim. And to Samuel had been given the charge of not only organising a band of prophet-teachers but himself visiting the cities and offering sacrifices. There is no prevarication in his plea to the elders of Bethlehem. His Divine charge was that of a secret anointing, but the elders were to share in the peace-offering which accompanied it. Possibly of those who saw the actual anointing, not one understood its import. David himself must have known he was Divinely chosen for some future purpose, but the Spirit of the Lord upon him made him wise to wait the fuller unfolding of the Divine will . . . We do not know how long elapsed between David’s anointing and his victory over Goliath . . . Here David stands face to face with the ‘impossible’. His battle cry to the Philistines is his declaration to Israel of the source of its strength. Saul must have recognized in the youth the very power he himself had once wielded” (Huntley).

Probably the account in xvi. 14–23 belongs chronologically between xviii. 5 and 6. This would explain why Saul did not know David at the time when he killed Goliath, xvii. 56, 57, and corrects the apparent discrepancy about his age at the time, see xvi. 18 and xvii. 42. Find on the map Bethlehem, David’s home, and the valley of Elah, which with Ajalon and Sorek provide the three avenues of approach from the Philistine country into Judea.

Aim of this Lesson

To show some of the characteristics required in a boy God can call to Him service.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Let the children recall the fact that it was Samuel who anointed Saul to be king and who afterwards told him that God had rejected him. Not only was Saul rejected but all his family, so Jonathan could never be king.

The New King Found—Samuel mourned greatly over this till God gave him a new command. Read xvi. 1. Tell

how the old man feared to do this lest Saul should hear, so God told him to go and have a public day of worship in Bethlehem and to anoint the new king privately, but He did not tell him who was to be the new king (xvi. 2, 3). Picture the old man travelling from Ramah to Bethlehem, some twelve miles distance, and describe the surprise and fear of the Bethlehem people when he came—they evidently thought he had come to find some fault with them (xvi. 4). Tell how he told them to prepare for worship, and especially commanded Jesse, the rich farmer, to bring all his sons. Imagine the bustle and excitement in the city as they obeyed his orders. Picture the scene when all was ready, and the people assembled for worship. Proudly Jesse brought forward seven handsome young men and introduced them one by one to Samuel as his sons. Samuel never said why he wanted to see them, but each one he looked at very carefully and evidently admired them all. But he must have looked puzzled and uncertain. Read his question and Jesse's answer, xvi. 11—do you not think Jesse felt ashamed that he had not done exactly as Samuel said? Now he quickly sent for the shepherd boy. Describe him as he appeared before Samuel (xvi. 12), and vividly tell what Samuel did. All those big brothers saw what was done, but perhaps no one else did, and even they did not know just why Samuel had done this. It was a great day for the Bethlehem people, but chiefly for Jesse's family.

The New King at Work—It made no difference to David at first—he just went on looking after his father's sheep as before. But soon the Philistines began coming up into the Israelites' mountains again, and then King Saul had to go out to fight them. And this time David's three eldest brothers were in the army. When they went away to fight it must have made more work than ever for David to do, but he was an industrious boy and always did his work well. Tell the errand David was sent on by his father (xvii. 17, 18) and picture the boy going all alone the 17 miles to Elah where Saul and his army were camped. When he arrived he found all the soldiers greatly afraid—tell the strange thing he heard (xvii. 4–11, 16). Picture him finding and talking with his brothers (xvii. 22). Just then the Philistine giant appeared.

again (xvii. 23). Tell of the conversation between David and the soldiers (xvii. 25, 26, 30), and how David's words were repeated to King Saul (xvii. 31).

The New King Proved—Picture vividly the shepherd boy being interviewed by the king, and read what David said, xvii. 32–37—show that David was not proud and boastful when he said this but was showing his confidence in God. Describe how Saul dressed David (xvii. 38), and think how funny David must have looked and felt. No wonder he took the things off again (xvii. 39). Very graphically describe how he did go—how the Philistine met him—what each said—how David killed him (xvii. 40–49). When Samuel heard that he must have felt more sure than ever that God had led him to the right person for king, for David was industrious and brave and God-fearing.

LESSON 25

DAVID AND JONATHAN

1 Sam. xviii. 1–11; xix. 1–7; xx.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“Teachers should read the whole of chap. xviii as well as the lesson portion. Two threads are to be traced in this and the following lesson: the development of Jonathan's love and of Saul's hatred.

“At first possibly Jonathan's generous heart was stirred by the sight of David's courage, and he who himself had done great exploits in faith, see xiv. 6, etc., recognised the unmistakeable presence of God with David. We wonder if at first he realised that this was he whom God had chosen to inherit the throne of Israel. He did so fully in later days (xx. 15 and xxiii. 17), and it may have been that his great renunciation was really made when he put off his princely robes for David.

“In Saul we trace the dreadful progress of a man at war

with God. The memory of Samuel's words (xv. 28), could never have been absent from him. There is suspicion in the inquiries he makes of Abner (xvii. 55); increased doubtless by the youth's phenomenal success in the later part of the war, reflected in the women's foolish songs; and at the signs of spreading popularity his wrath flamed out and never died to the day of his death on Mount Gilboa.

"In chap. xviii. we have Saul's secret plotting, each time foiled by David's greater success, till he was established as Prince by his marriage with Michal. Then the rash order was given which perhaps for the first time waked Jonathan to a real sense of his friend's danger and of his father's greater danger.

"Trace evidence of David's power to win the hearts of men. All great leadership has been marked by this power . . . David's Psalms reveal much of the secret of his charm; every problem of life was considered in the light of God, and so he was set free to act, and sway the hearts of others . . . David's hiding place was probably a cave, well known to Jonathan from boyhood days . . .

"To understand chap. xx. aright, with its elaborate and secret arrangements, we must note that everything recorded after Jonathan's last pleading was kept secret from him . . . David's excuse about the feast at Bethlehem was a hypothetical case given to test Saul. Again and again we find such an expedient used by him. Truth, pure and absolute, came to the conscience of the world in Christ alone. Note that in verse 31 Saul reveals the real secret of his enmity. He had set his heart on the establishment of a hereditary monarchy in direct defiance of the two-fold rejection of Jehovah. Jonathan never shows so kingly as here. Why was it necessary for Jonathan to take the lad with him next morning? His every movement would be watched by Saul, whose spies were already probably scouring the country to Bethlehem. But David would not flee without a parting word, and that word was 'Jehovah'" (Huntley).

The sign of the arrows was necessary lest Jonathan was unable to get away alone to meet David—so important a man would usually be surrounded by courtiers. Even when David was in hiding he was able apparently to communicate

with Jonathan, xx. 1; xxiii. 15, 16. Saul's madness and jealousy make a dark background against which this unselfish friendship shines the more brightly—it is one of the most striking examples in all literature of a true friendship.

Aim of the Lesson

To show the beauty of true friendship.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Last week we heard how David, a shepherd boy, delivered the people from the Philistines—but he was not the only young man who had done a brave thing like that—who was the other? (Jonathan)

The Beginning of a Friendship—When David had killed the giant he was at once taken again to King Saul. As the king and the army were out in camp it was probably to the durbar tent that David was taken. There sitting beside the king was Jonathan, and as David told what he had done and Saul thanked him for it, Jonathan felt he had never seen a finer looking boy than David. Describe what he looked like (xvii. 42). Jonathan was perhaps 7 or 8 years older and the son of a king, but he felt he must get to know David. Think how glad he was when Saul said David was to stay with the army (xviii. 2), and imagine how day by day the two young men would meet and talk together. When they packed up their tents and went back to Gibeah David went also. But there was one thing that must have troubled David. Remind the children of his anointing to the kingdom. But Jonathan was the rightful heir—could David be Jonathan's friend and yet take his throne from him? Picture him at last telling Jonathan all about it—now what would Jonathan do? Most princes would kill a man who said he was going to take the kingdom, or at least have him made a prisoner. But Jonathan loved and admired David so much that he felt he was just the man to be king—describe what he did (xviii. 3, 4). Did ever you hear of anything so unselfish as that?

The Friendship Strengthened—But now a terrible thing

happened. King Saul was of course very sad and disappointed because God had said he was to lose his kingdom, but instead of being sorry for his sin he became very angry and resentful and gradually his mind was affected and he became really mad. When a mad fit came on the only thing which soothed him was music so they looked for a musician. Soon they found that David was a clever player on the harp, so he was called to the palace to play to the king. How glad Jonathan must have been, for now he could see David oftener. But that madness soon made Saul begin to dislike David. Somehow or other he began to suspect that David and not Jonathan would be king after him, and then he became very jealous of David. Tell briefly of the further war with the Philistines where David again distinguished himself, and how the people praised him (xviii. 6, 7). All that made it very difficult for Jonathan still to be friends with David. But one thing was a great help—David married Jonathan's sister, Michal—think how they rejoiced over that—they were now brothers as well as friends, and both were brave strong men.

The Friendship Tested—At last Saul's mad jealousy became so great that he could not bear to see David any longer, so he gave an order that he was to be killed (xix. 1)! What would Jonathan do now? Help the children to appreciate his dilemma—duty to his friend conflicting with duty to his father and king. First he went and found David—read what he said to him, xix. 2. Then he went to his poor mad father—read what he said to him, xix. 4, 5. Show what a dangerous thing this was to do—Saul might have been so angry that in his madness he might have ordered Jonathan's death too. But instead he felt ashamed of himself and promised that David should not be killed. Think how quickly Jonathan sent round word that the king cancelled his order, and then he brought David back again from his hiding place. How thankful David must have been for such a friend as Jonathan.

The Parting—Saul was really quite mad so David never knew how long he would be safe. Tell of his narrow escape while he was playing his harp (xix. 9, 10), and how he left home and went to take refuge with Samuel (xix. 18). How long he stayed there we do not know, but after awhile he

and Jonathan managed to arrange a meeting. Think how secretly this had to be done, and for a prince like Jonathan, with courtiers always in attendance, it must have been very difficult to get away alone. Perhaps they had to meet at night. Read xx. 1-4, and show that Jonathan even yet could hardly believe that David was in such danger as he feared. Then they made a plan to test Saul (xx. 5-7) and an arrangement by which Jonathan could give information to David even if they were unable to meet again (xx. 18-22). Tell in detail what these plans were. Then David went and hid for the three days. Vividly picture the new-moon feast in Saul's palace (xx. 25, 26). Imagine Jonathan's anxiety and suspense all through the first day, and his relief when that day was over and Saul had said nothing. Describe the second day's gathering and tell Saul's question (xx. 27). How Jonathan must have feared when he heard it. Tell of Jonathan's reply, (xx. 28, 29). Then the mad king lost control of himself again—first he insulted Jonathan (xx. 30, 31), and then tried to kill him—vividly picture this (xx. 33), and describe Jonathan's actions and feelings (xx. 34). Now Jonathan knew that not only was David's life in danger, but it was not safe for him to show his friendship. The next day, at the time appointed, Jonathan and his attendant went out shooting—describe what happened (xx. 35-39). Jonathan knew that somewhere near David would be listening, and he knew the sorrow this message would give him. So, watching his opportunity, he sent the boy back to the palace and hurried away into the jungle. There he managed to find David and bid him farewell before letting him go. Describe the parting scene (xx. 41, 42). Which was the sadder at this? But it made no difference to their friendship—they loved each other as much as ever.

LESSON 26

THE BORDER CHIEF

1 Sam. xxii, xxiii.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Read chap. xxi. as well as the lesson passage, and trace on a map all David's wanderings: Nob. xxi. 1-9; Gath, in the Philistine country, from which he again quickly escaped, xxi. 10-15; Adullam, xxii. 1; Mizpeh in Moab, xxii. 3; Forest of Hareth, xxii. 5; Keilah, xxiii. 7; Wilderness of Ziph. xxiii. 14; Hachilah and Maon near Jeshimon, xxiii. 19, 24; Engedi, xxiii. 29; Paran, xxv. 1; Philistine country, xxvii., etc. Note the treachery of Doeg, xxii. 9, 22; of the men of Keilah, xxiii. 7, 12, 13; and of the Ziphites, xxiii. 19; xxvi. 1.

"Mark the period of David's outlaw life in three sections.

(a) Before Saul's actual attack. David's band gathering to him (chap. xxii. 1 to xxiii. 14) . . . Note that already his plan was made; his band should be champions of the wronged. (xxiii. 1-5), but never used to attack Saul.

(b) The Contest with Saul. Chap. xxiii. 19 to xxvi. 25. Two typical incidents are given where David spares his enemy. In between there is the truce made by Samuel's death. And here also we have the typical scene from the outlaw days in chap. xxv.

(c) The exile in Philistia. Chap. xxvii. to end" (Huntley).

"It is remarkable how many of David's psalms date from those dark and sad days when he was hunted as a partridge upon the mountains. His path may be tracked through the Psalter, as well as in the sacred narrative of his wanderings. Keilah, Ziph, Maon, Engedi, yielded themes for strains which will live for ever. To this gifted singer the power was entrusted of eliciting the music that lay concealed in the least congenial haunts. Is it not strange that these wild desolations are now immortal, and that each has contributed chords to the complete music of the soul? . . . His stay in Keilah was brought to a summary close . . . This was about the lowest

ebb in David's fortunes. The king was searching for him every day with a malignity which made it evident that he had come out to seek his life. Beneath the expressions and formulas of devout religion which he carefully maintained (xxiii. 7, 21), Saul secretly cherished the resolve of thwarting the Divine purpose. He knew, so Jonathan told his friend in a hurried interview the two noble youths arranged in the wood of Ziph, that David would be king over Israel. But this did not abate his determination to take his life if he could. What a desperate condition his soul had reached, as the result of turning itself to his own wild and evil way! And manifestly David had every reason to fear the outbursts of the hatred which, in proud defiance, had set itself against the will of God . . . The Psalmist sets his experiences to music in two priceless songs. Psalm lvii, 'Be merciful to me, O God, for my soul taketh refuge in Thee;' and Psalm cxlii, 'I cry with my voice unto the Lord, with my voice unto the Lord do I make supplication'' (Meyer). See also Psalms xi, xiii, xvii, xxii, xxv, lxiv.

Aim of this Lesson

To show the nature of true loyalty.

Story for the Class

Introduction.—Let the children describe a cave, and if possible show them a picture of one. Would it be a nice place to live in?

Living in a Cave.—After wandering about for awhile after leaving Saul, David found that a cave was the safest place for him to stay in. Tell the name of his cave and picture vividly the 400 men who joined him there (xxii. 1, 2). What a lot of desperate men they must have been! Would you like to have such a company living in your district? Show that generally such men would become robbers and dacoits, but David determined that no one should have cause to complain of his company or to be afraid of them—he would teach them to help and defend the weak and never to steal. Tell how his old father and mother were amongst them—evidently Saul's hatred had made him persecute them too. Imagine David's

anxiety on their account and tell how he went to the king of the next country and asked him to keep them safe (xxii. 3, 4). Tell of the prophet's advice to him when he got back, and how he went some 12 miles south to the great Forest of Hareth as his next hiding place (xxii. 5).

Hearing Bad News—One day, soon after he got there, a man came to his camp in great distress. David recognised him as a priest who had helped him when first he fled from Saul (xxi. 1-9), and by degrees he told David a terrible story. Tell this to the children as Abiathar told it to David (xxii. 20, 21). Saul had heard how Ahimelech had helped David so sent for him. Tell their conversation and how the order was given to the soldiers but they refused to obey (xxii. 13-17). Then the mean and cowardly Doeg, who had told the tale to Saul, did the dastardly act and killed 84 priests! When David heard that they had suffered thus because they had helped him, he was greatly troubled, but all he could do now was to help poor Abiathar, and him he welcomed among his band of men.

Saving a City—Soon another messenger came with bad news—this time it was from a city near by—read what he said, xxiii. 1. Picture David praying and asking God what he should do and feeling sure he ought to go to their help (xxiii. 2). Read what his men said, xxiii. 3, and help the children to realise the strength of their argument. But David was not caring about his own safety, he felt he must help this beleaguered city. So again he prayed (xxiii. 4), and this time he persuaded his men to go with him. Tell of his complete victory (xxiii. 5).

Betrayed—Now what should the people of Keilah have done for David? They might have helped him to hide, but instead they sent word to Saul that he was in their city, and could easily be caught. David did not know of this, but he felt uneasy and again asked God to show him what to do. And God made him understand in his heart how treacherous these people were (xxiii. 10-12). By this time David had with him about 600 men and they might have begun to fight against the people in the city to punish them, but David felt it was the best way to keep friendly if he could, so he just told his men they had better leave the city. Picture them going,

as quietly as possible, and hiding again in the caves and wild parts of the country.

Relieved—Now in the jungly country to which David came next there was a village called Ziph, and these people were treacherous like the Keilites. At once they saw a chance to gain favour with King Saul—read the message they sent to him, xxiii. 19, 20. Describe how they led the king and his army away into the jungle—how David's scouts told him—how the two bands nearly met, David and his men being on one side of a low hill, Saul and his men on the other side (xxiii. 24–26). What a desperate position for David to be in ! But just at that moment another messenger came to Saul—read the message, xxiii. 27. There was no time for delay—Saul had to hurry back to his capital and get ready for war against a real enemy. So David was saved again, and without having to do any fighting—how he must have thanked God for this.

LESSON 27

THE CHIVALROUS OUTLAW

I Sam. xxvi.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“ Our lesson includes only the second occasion on which David spared Saul. The first time (chap. xxiv), Saul was alone in the great cave of Engedi ; with David's fierce band only hidden in the dark recesses and ready to fall upon him at a word from their master. The second time he was surrounded by army and baggage, and protected by soldier guards. We wonder what strange blindness to the hand of God could have urged him after each event to pursue his mad course. In the meantime the Philistines, seeing the utter wastage of Israel's resources on the king's quest, were gathering their forces for the last fearful battle at Gilboa. See

on a map the wilderness of Judea by the Dead Sea, and note how the hills run out to the desert in long spurs, descending by precipices and chasms to the low sea coast. The Hill of Hachilah is one such spur, divided by a wady from the place where David's men lay hidden. Search for details about Abner, Ahimelech the Hittite, Abishai. A study of the records of David's mighty men (1 Chron. xi. 20-25 and xii. 8-14, etc.) will show the kind of material David had gathered round him. Such exploits as this would be to the hearts of every one of them.

"But if we only follow David's exploits we shall fail to understand what made him 'a man after God's own heart.' Behind all there was the root-principle of absolute faith that God would fulfil His own purposes. David would never put out his hand to wrest the thing that was his from the course of events, as Jacob did. And love for, and loyalty to Saul show through the whole. Saul and David never met again" (Huntley).

"On each of these occasions (when Saul was in his power) David acted with the magnanimity that becomes a hero and a saint. He would take no mean advantage of his adversary. He would not retaliate or avenge his wrong. He refused to admit the specious argument that opportunity meant permission, and that licence meant liberty. He quieted the impetuous fever of his soul, resisted the subtle temptation of the adversary, and elected to await the slow unfolding of the Divine purpose" (Meyer).

Aim of this Lesson

To encourage chivalry in the children.

Story for the Class

Introduction—How was it that Saul found out where David was hiding? (Treachery of the people in the locality.)

Betrayed Again—And again the very same thing happened. David was once more in the neighbourhood of Ziph, and the Ziphites sent and told Saul. Describe the stealthy approach of Saul's army, and how they camped on a hill with only a

narrow valley between them and David. They did not yet know that they were quite so near to David, but it was well that David was cautious and kept hidden or he would have been caught that day. As it was his scouts came and told him that Saul was close to him again with 3,000 men (xxvi. 1-4). And David had 600 men—what could he do? Tell how he crept along to a point from which he could see Saul's great army and describe what he saw (xxvi. 5).

In the Enemy's Camp—Then a plan of action flashed into David's mind. Turning to two men standing by him, David asked something. Read his question and Abishai's answer, xxvi. 6. Vividly picture the two men, as dusk came, creeping away from their own camp and nearer and nearer to Saul's. What would happen if any of Saul's men caught them? Presently they reached the edge of Saul's camp—think how careful they were not to make any sound and to wait till they knew most would be asleep. Silently they made their way amongst the sleeping soldiers till they came to where Saul himself lay. Describe how they found him (xxvi. 7). Read what Abishai whispered triumphantly to David, xxvi. 8. Read David's reply, xxvi. 9-11. Do the children think Abishai was disappointed? But David showed again that his trust was in God to send deliverance. Tell what they took away, and picture them creeping back again to their own camp. Did David's men regard the expedition as a good joke and laugh over it, or did they think David ought to have killed Saul? What would you have thought?

Talking to Saul—Tell how, when David was safely back again, he shouted to wake his enemies. He called to Abner, Saul's general, who was sleeping beside him. Read what he said, xxvi. 14-16, and see that the children appreciate the sarcasm of his words. How very foolish Abner must have felt when he saw what had happened! The noise waked Saul, and he recognised David's voice—read what they shouted to each other across the narrow valley, xxvi. 17-25. So David's generous act in sparing Saul was rewarded; but he knew that Saul was really mad and might at any time change his mind again, so he still kept in hiding trusting in God to keep him safe.

LESSON 28

THE PRINCE'S FAREWELL

1 Sam. xxiii. 14-18; xxxi. 1-6; 2 Sam. i.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

It is impossible to say how long a time elapsed between the subject of last week's lesson and this. Teachers should read the intervening chapters and notice the chief events. For David it was a period of hiding in the Philistine country where he had several adventures. For Saul, the Philistines were closing in on his kingdom, and his madness was more pronounced and hopeless than ever. His appeal to the witch of Endor, chap. xxviii, on the eve of the great battle, was a last desperate attempt to again secure God's help. For Jonathan the period must have been peculiarly trying. Separated from his friend, he was bound to stand by his mad father in all his follies, and to watch the approaching catastrophe without being able to do anything to avert it. So far as we know his last meeting with David was in the neighbourhood of Ziph, before he finally fled to the Philistine country, xxiii. 16-18. Note their plans for the future, and imagine what would have been the result in David's reign had Jonathan filled the place held by Joab. Find on the map the places in Philistia connected with David's sojourn there, also Shunem, Endor and Gilboa, noting to what an extent the Philistines must have overrun the land to be found in such strength in that part. See also that to reach Endor from Gilboa, Saul had to penetrate right through the Philistine army which was camped in the Valley of Jezreel. This was on the last night of his life—the next morning the Philistines attacked and defeated the Israelites on Mount Gilboa. Note the two accounts of Saul's death, xxxi. 4 and 2 Sam. i. 5-10. The Amalekite evidently invented his story thinking to gain favour with David, 2 Sam. iv. 10, but was soon disillusioned, i. 13-16.

In David's lament "the greatness of Israel's loss is brought out in the fancied exultation with which the daughters

of Philistis would welcome their returning warriors ; in the lasting curse invoked on the mountains where the shield of the mighty was polluted with gore and dust ; and in the exploits which the heroes wrought with bow and sword before they fell. And then the psalmist bursts into pathetic reminiscences of the ancient friendship which had bound him to the departed. He forgets all he had suffered at the hands of Saul ; he thinks only of the ideal of his early manhood. His chivalrous love refuses to consider anything but what had been brave and fair and noble in his liege lord, before self-will had dragged down his soul into the murky abyss, where for the last few years it had been entombed as in a living grave. 'Lovely and pleasant' such is the epitaph he inscribes on the memorial cenotaph. But for Jonathan there must be a special stanza. Might had been his, as Saul's. Had he not single-handed, attacked an army, and wrought a great deliverance ? But with all his strength, he had been sweet. A brother-soul ; every memory of whom was very pleasant, like a sweet strain of music, of the scent of the spring breeze. Tender, gentle, loving as a woman. A knightly nature ; dreaded by foe, dearly loved by friend ; terrible as a whirlwind in battle, but capable of exerting all the witchery of a woman's love, and more" (Meyer).

Aim of this Lesson

To show the beauty of a magnanimous spirit.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who was David's best friend ? Let the children recall a few details about Jonathan. Which of the two men do the children think was the most sad over the separation ?

The Secret Meeting—So far as we know, during all those years of David's wanderings they only managed to meet once. This was just before David's secret visit to Saul's camp in the night about which we heard last week. Somehow David succeeded in getting word to Jonathan telling where he was hiding and one night Jonathan came to see him in the

jungle. Imagine with what caution they met, and picture their joy in once more being together. Think how many questions they would have to ask each other. Tell the chief topic of their conversation (xxiii. 16-18), and suggest some of the things they planned to do together in the future. Notice that there was no talk of Jonathan being king—he was quite content to take the second place.

Bad News—It was very soon after this that David had to escape to the Philistine country—he found that he would be safer hiding amongst his people's enemies than in his own country! We do not know how long he stayed there, but he must often have heard those people talking about their enemies, the people of Israel, and how they meant to fight and conquer them. Why did they not kill David and his band who were all Israelites? See if the children can tell that because Saul so hated David people thought David must hate Saul and be one of his enemies (xxvii. 12). Then came the day when the Philistine army marched out to battle with the Israelites. Imagine how impatiently David waited for news of what happened. And when that news came it was as bad as could be. Vividly picture the arrival of the refugee (2 Sam. i. 2), and tell the story he told to David (i. 3-10). David's enemy was dead, but his friend was dead too! Graphically describe the grief of David and his friends, noting that they mourned for Saul as well as for Jonathan (i. 11, 12). Briefly tell how this Amalekite was punished (i. 13-16). Now it happened that only part of his story was true and the rest was a lie—tell how Saul had really died with his three sons and the flower of the Israelite army (xxxi. 1-6).

David's Lament—Doubtless there were others besides this Amalekite who expected David would rejoice over Saul's death—he was of course now free to return to his own land and to give up this life of always hiding. But only sorrow filled his heart. His lament should be read in class—i. 19-27—but it must be well read. Let the children read it verse by verse if they can do so well, or one read it all through, or the teacher should read it if they cannot do it well enough. See that they understand that Gath and Askelon are Philistine cities. Encourage them to memorise these verses afterwards.

LESSON 29

DAVID COMES TO HIS THRONE

2 Sam. ii. 1-4; v. 1-10

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

David's life after Saul's death is summed up in v. 4, 5. To-day's lesson takes us to the point where he was established king over all Israel in Jerusalem. To appreciate the new difficulty which faced him it is necessary to understand something of the jealousy between the different tribes. It is no small testimony to the statesmanship of Saul that he had won the allegiance of all the tribes. But he was of Benjamin and David was of Judah, and Judah being a strong and large tribe he was sure to encounter the opposition of the north and especially of Ephraim, which had been a leading tribe hitherto. In deciding first upon Hebron he made a very wise choice as this was a city connected with the earliest history of the nation. It was the ancient Kirjath-Arba of the Canaanites (Gen. xxiii. 2) and was justly "considered a town of great antiquity. It dominated the vale of Mamre, celebrated in tradition ever since Abraham had pitched his tents there on his return from Egypt. It lay moreover, in the neighbourhood of the cave of Machpelah, which was supposed to be the tomb of the patriarch and his first wife. Hebron had been the first city to declare for David; for seven years and a half it had sheltered him in the early days of his kingship; and in addition it occupied the centre of the tribe of Judah, the only one that had taken part against Saul. Yet the young sovereign had the wisdom to resist all these important reasons for retaining it as his permanent residence. Near Bethlehem, his native town; to the south of Gibeah, the Benjamite fortress that had become the capital of Saul; south-west of Mizpeh, where the deputies of the tribes met in conclave, rose a rocky height, crowned by a fortified crag. This was Mount Zion, this was Jerusalem, still in the hands of the Jebusites. The position seemed impregnable and able

to resist a long blockade, for the rocks which supported the walls of the town enclosed a spring. And, as a fact, the citadel of the Jebusites had triumphed over every attack. Saul himself had not dared to undertake its siege. And yet it was Jerusalem that David determined to make his headquarters; giving proof in so doing of the keen political sense and the clearness of vision which characterise the true statesman. Although he had been placed in authority by delegates from all the tribes, there yet remained some hostile and turbulent minorities whose internal feuds continually hindered the work of union. For two and a half years, perhaps three, he had endeavoured to consolidate a government that still lacked strength, he had attempted to win over the disaffected and had seen the vanity of his efforts. So long as he did not establish a political centre independent of the past, and in harmony with the new administration he would never break down the barriers between the national and the foreign elements which composed the tribes, he would never allay the jealousies born of an exaggerated autonomy; and his sovereignty, battered and disputed, would be torn asunder between the centre and the south, between Israel and Judah. He must needs be as thoroughly impartial as was his God . . . If only success attended his enterprise the annexation of a long-coveted place would furnish him with a glorious pretext for abandoning Hebron, and for founding in a neutral position on the rocks of Zion a capital which would symbolise the homogeneity of the people of God" (Dieulafoy).

Note his method of capturing Jerusalem, v. 6-8, and 1 Chron. xi. 4-6. The "gutter" was the tunnel through the hill which brought water from the spring of Gihon on the south-east into the city. Through this tunnel Joab climbed thereby forcing an entry into the city and thus won his position at the head of David's army. Trace the further history of the house of Saul during this time, ii. 8—iii. 1, 26, 27; iv. 1-12.

Aim of this Lesson

To show that God's purposes must succeed.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the fact that David had been anointed to be king. What then would he do as soon as Saul was dead?

Going to Hebron—First he prayed about it—was it now time for him to go back home? If so to which place should he go? And as he prayed God made him feel that the time had come for which he had waited so long, and that the old city of Hebron was the place to go to (ii. 1). Picture vividly his departure—what excitement and bustle there must have been when all the 600 men with their wives and families began to get ready to go. Imagine all the scenes of preparation—of departure—of the journey lasting perhaps two days—of the arrival in the neighbourhood of Hebron. How happy they were now that there was no need to hide all the time.

Crowned King—Think of the stir this made in the country around, and how everybody talked of David's return. "He will be king," they all began saying. And so it happened that almost as soon as he reached Hebron, a number of the leading men from all that part of the country came to him. Imagine the scenes of rejoicing in and around the city—what a welcome change for David! And he soon showed that he was indeed fit to be king—he was wise and everybody loved him.

Reigning in Hebron—But it was only the people in that part of the land who made David king. Near Saul's old home they wanted one of Saul's sons for king. But it would never do to have two kings in such a small land, so David had to try and win the confidence of all the other people. For seven years he ruled well and all the people under him were happy and contented, and his fame spread all over the land. Everywhere people began to say, "David ought to be king over all of us." One difficulty in the way was that Hebron was too far south and a long way from Gibeah where Saul used to reign, and David felt if only he could find a good place between Hebron and Gibeah that would help him to gain all the people.

Conquering Jerusalem—Many times he had looked up to a strong fortress not far from his own old home at Bethlehem.

In the old days when he was a shepherd and minding his sheep he had looked at it and wandered near it, and now he thought if only he could capture that fortified hill, what a splendid city he could make there. Explain that the Israelites had never conquered it all the years since Joshua's time—even Saul had never tried to capture it. But one day David marched his army there. When the people inside looked over their wall and saw him coming they jeered at him. Read their taunt, v. 6, which meant that they thought their fort so strong that it only needed lame men to keep it safe. Then David turned to his army and, pointing to the tunnel in the hill up which the people in the fort drew their water, he said, "The man who will climb up there and capture the fort shall be the head of my army." At once his nephew, Joab, determined to do it. Graphically describe how he got into the fort and imagine the consternation of the inhabitants when he suddenly appeared out of their water hole! He had only to open the gate and let in David and the army!

King of all Israel—That was the final deed which convinced the nation that David was just the very man to be their king. So from all over the whole country the head men came in numbers to Hebron. Picture the impressive scene as they swore allegiance to David and proclaimed him their king (v. 1-3). And from that time David left Hebron and made Jerusalem his capital, and he and all the people praised God for the way He had helped and blessed them.

LESSON 30

DAVID ESTABLISHES HIS KINGDOM

2 Sam. vi. 12-15, 17-19; viii. 1-18.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Two aspects of David's reign and activities must be considered in our lesson this week, the religious and the political.

(1) *Religious*. No sooner was Jerusalem captured than



THE JOYFUL PROCESSION

David was eager to make it the religious as well as the political centre of the nation. The Tabernacle had been at Shiloh from the time of Joshua, Josh. xviii. 1. But when the ark was captured by the Philistines in Eli's time, 1 Sam. iv, the sanctuary was probably destroyed, and on its return the ark was placed at Kirjath-Jearim, 1 Sam. vii. 1. Consider David's error and the tragedy which followed it. "It has been suggested in some quarters that the breach of Uzzah was a needlessly severe act of God—a too stern treatment of a sin of ignorance. On the other hand, it must be borne in mind how important it was at this juncture to insist on literal obedience to the ancient code. If it had been permitted to man's caprice to set its injunctions at defiance, it is easy to see that the entire system might have fallen into disuse, and its important functions been left unrealized" (Meyer).

When, three months later, the ark was again removed, it was done with scrupulous care and great ceremony. "In the accounts of the rejoicings, the immense concourse of the people, the number of sacrificial victims, the splendour of the pageant, all pale before the personality of David. As a king, he has conceived the political design of restoring the cult of the ark in order to cement the union of the tribes, he has guided the return of the people to traditions that had been neglected or misunderstood, and has formed the escort and organised the details of the triumphal entry into Jerusalem. But directly the procession has started the king is effaced; and it is as a priest that he assists at the sacrifice and penetrates into the tabernacle, that he presides at the installation of the ark, the symbol of the covenant of Jehovah with the sons of Jacob. He bears no token of royalty, no attribute of power: he has donned the priestly ephod, and as a prophet seized with the Spirit of God, he sings and dances with the other prophets. When Michal, the daughter of Saul, reproaches him for appearing in the costume of a simple priest and for compromising the royal dignity in the eyes of his servants, he bares his soul to her in his answer and expresses all the ardour of his faith" (Dieulafoy).

(2) *Political*. "The time of rest which succeeded the removal of the ark was broken in upon by a succession of fierce wars. One after another the surrounding nations

gathered together, either singly or in confederacies, against David . . . The *Philistines*—For the last time they arose ; but David smote and subdued them, and, to use a significant phrase, took the bridle of the mother-city out of their hand. The *Moabites*—The hereditary alliance, dating from the time of Ruth, between the Hebrew monarch and his restless neighbours was insufficient to restrain them ; and Benaiah was commissioned to lead an expedition against them, which was so successful that their entire army fell into his hands, and was dealt with according to the terrible custom of the time, one-third only being spared. The *Syrians*—The king of Zobah and the Syrians of Damascus were utterly defeated ; vast spoils of gold and brass fell into David's hands, and the border of Israel was carried to the line of the Euphrates, so that the ancient promise made by God to Abraham was fulfilled : ' Unto thy seed have I given this land from the river of Egypt unto the great river, the river Euphrates.' *Edom*—Whilst David was engaged in the north, the Edomites invaded Judah, and Abishai was despatched against them. On the west shore of the Dead Sea he encountered them, and slew eighteen thousand in the village of Salt. The whole land even to Petra, its rockbound capital, was slowly reduced to submission ; and, with the exception of Hadad, who made his way to Egypt, the royal family was exterminated. *Ammon*—A friendly overture on the part of David was met with gross insult ; and Hanun, apprehending the infliction of condign revenge, formed a vast coalition. The combined forces amounted to thirty-two thousand, with a strong contingent of cavalry and chariots, against which David could only oppose the Hebrew infantry, the use of horses being forbidden by the Mosaic legislation. It was a supreme moment in David's career, and taxed the utmost resources of Joab's generalship. By God's good hand, however, victory was secured ; the tide of Israelite invasion swept over the hostile country ; Rabbah, the capital city, fell into David's hand ; the people were put to work with saws, arrows and axes, probably preparing materials for the erection of public works, and perhaps the temple itself " (Meyer).

The battle of Rephaim, v. 17-25, must also be considered in this connection, for it was quite the most decisive engage-

ment with the Philistines. David's military tactics were ahead of anything that had been conceived hitherto and the Philistines never recovered from the defeat suffered that day. Jerusalem itself was threatened at that time for Rephaim lies immediately to the west of the city.

Aim of this Lesson

To show that it is the man who puts God first who achieves true success.

Story for the Class

Introduction—What was the name of the city David captured? (Jerusalem) Let the children suggest what he would need to do in such a place to make it fit for his capital.

Bringing the Ark—There were many things to do, but David's first thought was about God and His worship. He determined that Jerusalem should not only be the centre of his government but of the people's worship also. Tell of the great procession that went down to Kirjath-Jearim to bring the Ark to Jerusalem (vi. 1, 2). Vividly describe how they brought it out of the house—how it was carried and how the people accompanied it (vi. 3-5). Picture the scene when they came to the rough ground round Nachon's threshing floor (vi. 6) and tell of Uzzah's instant death (vi. 7). But Uzzah was not careless or disrespectful—then why was he punished? Explain the law about carrying the Ark—if they had been obeying this no such accident as they feared could have happened, and we see that God had difficulty in teaching them to be reverent. Read what David said, vi. 9, and picture him in his alarm having the Ark taken into a house near by and left there (vi. 10). Here they were careful of it—tell the result (vi. 11). David hearing of this determined to try once more to get it to his city. But this time he carefully read the law and obeyed every detail. Picture the procession this time—priests carrying the Ark by means of the long poles slid through its golden rings—musicians—the king himself dancing in front of all (vi. 12-14). In the city was

a new tent prepared for it (1 Chron. xv. 1), and there amidst the people's reverent but joyful worship the Ark was once more installed (vi. 17), and became a central meeting place.

Fighting the Philistines—Now everything looked settled and peaceful inside the kingdom, but troubles at once arose from outside. Which people do the children think were most likely to make trouble for the Israelites? Their old enemies the Philistines were very angry to see the country so united and David so firmly established on the throne, and they determined to defeat him as they had done Saul. And while David was busy settling himself in Jerusalem they gathered a big army together and marched almost up to the city before David could get ready to fight them. When David heard they were coming he first left the city and gathered his army together in the wilderness: then he suddenly marched back, coming round both sides of the big Philistine host, and took them so by surprise that he entirely defeated them and drove them back to their own country. Never again did they succeed in getting a big army together and the Israelites had very little more trouble from these old enemies.

Fighting other Enemies—Now the Philistines lived on the west of the Israelites, but on the north and east were other people who all wanted to fight David. And as David could not be everywhere at once he had to divide up his army. He took some soldiers and went north to drive away the Syrians and Abishai took part of the army and went south-east to fight the Edomites. In the east the Ammonites were beginning to give trouble, so Joab went with another part of the army against them—what was it Joab had done to make him famous? And against the Moabites in the east another captain, Benaiah, was sent with another part of the army. And although all these wars were going on at the same time the Israelites were victorious in every one. No wonder everyone began to talk about what a great and mighty king David was (viii. 13).

LESSON 31

SOLOMON THE TEMPLE BUILDER

1 Kings v ; vi ; vii. 13-51 ; viii.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

The aim of the builders of the Temple in Jerusalem was to produce a building as nearly as possible like the Tabernacle of the wilderness, but of permanent materials. Stone was therefore largely introduced in the walls and foundations, but, to preserve the appearance of the original sanctuary, it was covered and hidden with timber, vi. 18. The acacia wood used in the wilderness was now replaced by cedar from Lebanon, and the roof, which was now built with a gable, was also of this. The size of the building was doubled in length, breadth and height, and a porch was added at the entrance which was higher than the building itself. It was built on a raised stone platform ascended by twelve stone steps. On the tenth of these, which was just under the porch, stood two brazen pillars known as Jachin and Boaz, and these were probably the most artistic features in the whole building. These pillars were about 39 ft. high and 5 ft. in diameter, and on the top of each was a square capital $7\frac{1}{2}$ ft. high. On these capitals was a design of basket or net work, and at each place where the diagonal lines intersected was a pomegranate flower, 200 altogether on each, all done in brass. There were also wreaths or festoons of flowers surrounding these. Above them again was a huge lotus flower, about 6 ft. high, on each, and round these was a screen of basket work like that on the square capitals below but hanging like a veil instead of being attached to the surface, vii. 15-22. At the entrance into the Temple, which was at the top of the steps beyond the pillars were four folding doors of fir wood with designs of palm-trees, flowers and cherubim, carved all over them. The cedar walls inside were also carved with a floral design, probably pomegranate. Across the middle of the Temple screening off the oracle, or Holy of Holies, were folding doors of olive wood, carved like the outer doors. The whole

of the interior was then covered with gold—vi. 15-22, 31-35. Inside the oracle the decoration was more elaborate still, vi. 29, 30, and there were set up the cherubim, vi. 23-28. Note that the work was not done on the Temple site—all the different parts were shaped and prepared before being brought there, vi. 7, vii. 46. Consider the two special men, of the same name and from the same land, who helped Solomon in all this work, v. 1-11; vii. 13, 14.

Aim of this Lesson

To encourage reverence for the House of God.

Story for the Cls

Introduction—When David brought the Ark to Jerusalem, where did he put it? (In a tent). Read what he one day said to the prophet who helped and advised him, 1 Chron. xvii. 1-4, 11, 12. David was not to build this sanctuary but his son was to do it. David, however, determined to prepare for it as far as he could, and all the rest of his life he collected materials that he thought would be useful when the time came to build. Before he died he handed these over to his son Solomon who was to succeed him—read the charge he gave to him, 1 Chron. xxviii. 9, 10, and picture him giving everything to Solomon (xxviii. 11, etc.) And when David died and Solomon became king, one of the first things he started to do was to build a wonderful Temple in Jerusalem.

The Timber Fellers—Now there was at that time a king reigning in the country right at the north of the Israelites, country, who had always been friendly with David and they had never fought each other. And in his country there were wonderful mountains with beautiful cedar (deodar) trees, and Solomon wanted some of this timber for building his Temple. So he sent a letter to this king, Hiram—read this, v. 3-6. Picture the messengers arriving in Tyre with the letter and tell how glad Hiram was to find David's son so wise a king. Read his reply to Solomon, v. 8, 9. Tell how Solomon paid for his timber (v. 11), and how he sent men to Lebanon to cut it under the direction of the Sidonians (v. 13, 14).

The Stone Cutters—At the same time that Solomon's men went to Tyre, Hiram's men came to Jerusalem. First came stone cutters to help in quarrying stone (v. 18). Remind the children that David had prepared both stone and timber, but not enough of either. Picture the men of both nations working together in the quarries under Jerusalem and in other places where they could find the right kind of stone, and tell how every piece was cut into just the size and shape required before it was taken from the quarry.

The Brass Workers—Then a great deal of brass work had to be done, and it was found best to do this neither in Jerusalem nor in Tyre, but down in the valley of the river Jordan. Tell who the chief of the brass workers was (vii. 13, 14), and vividly picture him and his fellows at work in their brass foundry by the river. Especially bring out the fact that all these men were skilful—each one had taken pains to perfect himself in some kind of work.

The Building—As any bit of work was finished, whether of timber or stone or brass, it was sent to Jerusalem and there it was fitted into its place in the wonderful Temple. Describe the finished building, especially the carving and other decorations. Show a picture of the Temple, if possible—perhaps a drawing of your own of the entrance with steps, pillars and folding doors. Which of the children can make the best drawing of what the Temple looked like?

The Dedication—When all was finished Solomon had a great meeting to dedicate the new Temple and bring the Ark from its tent into the Temple. Tell who came (viii. 1, 2), and describe the procession which brought the Ark (viii. 3, 4). Vividly picture the large assembly round the outside of the new building (only the priests could go inside), as the priests offered sacrifices and led the people's worship (viii. 5, 6). Then the king addressed the people—read what he said to them, viii. 12–21, after which he prayed to God that the new Temple, and all the worship there, and all the people might be blessed in every way. It was a most splendid and solemn occasion, and the people all realised that God was amongst them as they worshipped Him.

LESSON 32

ELIJAH'S FAITH IN GOD

1 Kings xvii.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"Study the historical setting of the lesson. Make a list of the kings between Solomon and Ahab in both kingdoms. Note that this was the third dynasty in Israel in the short space of about seventy years, and Ahab was the seventh king. Read xvi. 23-33. In Assyrian monuments Israel is the 'House of Omri.' This is accounted for by his policy, so foreign to Israel, and so disastrous finally, of making alliances with foreign nations. In their annals he was a great monarch; in the Divine records he 'did worse than all before him.' And prepared the way for his son's marriage, which corrupted Israel beyond cure. Study the history and religion of Jezebel. Ethbaal, her father, King of Tyre, gained his throne by murder of the former king. Jezebel brought with her to Israel a great company of Baal priests with their distinctive dress of white, with pointed caps. A great Baal temple was built in Samaria with a huge Baal and the Asherah posts and an altar for offerings, and the Phoenician worship was established with all its hateful and corrupting ceremonies. The form of Ahab's palace at Samaria has been recently traced, and there are remnants of a temple with avenues of pillars and terraces.

"Study the startling appearance of Elijah on the scene. Note other prophets who have appeared in the narratives. After Samuel we recall Gad and Nathan; then Ahijah the Shilonite (ch. xi); the unknown prophet of xiii. 1; and Jehu (xvi. 1). Through all Israel's history there were voices of warning or guidance at times of crisis—messengers to kings and people; but Elijah stands alone as the appointed agent of God's contest with Baal. Baal was 'natural force' and in his gift all the cherished good of Nature; but Jehovah closed the heavens that the folly of His people might be

manifest. The miracles of Elijah, as those of Elisha after him, are simple evidences of Jehovah's power in an age when the spiritual sense of His people was blinded. Consider the majesty of the prophets armed with the simple word of authority—'Thus saith the Lord.' Trace through the records of his ministry the recurring periods when 'The word of the Lord' came to him. Read James v. 17, 18, for suggestion as to the agony of shame for his people and the longing for the Divine witness that had preceded his change. Search Bible references to ravens; unclean, hungry, wild, yet ministers of God. (The word in Hebrew is similar to Arabs, but the story seems clearly to mean ravens. Arabs were not likely to pay daily visits to a prophet in a lonely wady; the ravens nested there.)

"Study our Lord's reference to the widow of Zarephath (Luke iv. 24-26). She lives as one of the honoured ones of history. In all Israel, while there were many widows, none was found with just the qualities which fitted this woman to shelter the prophet. Try during the study to discover these qualities. Study her home in Phoenicia, between Tyre and Sidon. A strange asylum for Elijah, in the very heart of King Ethbaal's land! Note the woman's regard for the name of Elijah's God. She may have been representative of a large class of people in the land of idols, acknowledging in her heart a holy God, yet as one having no part or lot in Him (ver. 18). And ver. 24 indicates a full and glad comprehension of the Divine power and truth. Consider why she should believe and obey the strange command of the prophet. So fearful a test would scarcely have been given to one who had not already that attitude towards God, as the God of Israel, which would make her willing to risk all at His word. The agony of effort and prayer when the child's soul came again are to be compared with Elisha's raising of the boy (2 Kings iv.), and contrast with our Lord's commands to the dead" (Huntley).

Aim of this Lesson

To show the meaning of faith.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers the names of the first three kings of the Israelites? Now we shall hear about another called Ahab. He did not reign in Jerusalem, but in Samaria, further north, and he lived a long time after David and Solomon. He was a very rich and a very clever king, but he was not good, and he had married a princess who worshipped idols. When she came to Samaria she brought her priests with her and soon very many of the people were also worshipping idols, and they never thought about God. How very sad David would have been had he known of it.

Famine—But one day, as the king and queen were enjoying themselves as usual surrounded by all their grand courtiers and attendants, there suddenly appeared amongst them a strange wild-looking man. He was clearly a countryman from some jungle place, but he was not a bit afraid or even embarrassed. He came right up to the king to speak to him. Read what he said, xvii. 1. Imagine the consternation and dread that spread over the gay company at those words—famine—famine! The king gave orders that the man was at once to be arrested, but he was nowhere to be found. The city was searched thoroughly but no trace of the strange man was seen anywhere. But they found out that his name was Elijah.

Cherith—But what had become of Elijah? The minute he had given his message God spoke to him in his heart—read what He said, xvii. 3, 4. Vividly picture him leaving the city—think what means he would take to avoid being seen—how he passed the guard at the gate—hid in a field perhaps till dark, then hurried away eastward as fast as he could. Imagine his thoughts especially as he pondered over how he was to be fed. Describe the wild, rocky gorge he eventually came to where, probably, he would live in a cave. High up among the cliffs were the nests of the wild birds, and soon they began arriving with food for their young ones. Elijah had no difficulty in securing all he needed from what they brought, and in the bottom of the gorge was a little river from which he could drink. Picture vividly the safety of his retreat. Perhaps for a whole year he stayed there—did he get tired of

it? But no command from God came, so he would not go. Then his river began to dry up--of course it would do so, had he not said there would be no rain for years? What a terrible prospect!

Zarephath—Read xvii. 9. Imagine his departure and the dangers of the journey. He had to go right through King Ahab's territory. Think of the famine-stricken state of the country through which he passed and how he must have grieved over it. How often did he hear people blaming him for it and wishing he was caught? Describe very vividly the woman he saw as he approached Zarephath (xvii. 10). Read their conversation, xvii. 10-14. Perhaps at first he was not sure if this was the woman God meant him to go to, but when she spoke of God in that way he must have felt satisfied. Describe how they were fed while the prophet was there (xvii. 15, 16).

The Widow's Reward—Tell of the sudden illness of the boy and of his death (xvii. 17). Picture her distress as she told Elijah and tell how he took the dead boy into his own room (xvii. 18, 19). Describe what he did there and read his prayers to God (xvii. 20, 21). Graphically tell the result (xvii. 22-24).

LESSON 33

ELIJAH'S CHALLENGE AT CARMEL

1 Kings xviii. 1-39

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"Gather indications from this chapter as to the severity and character of the drought. There was still water in the deeper rivers and perennial springs, but none for the parched land. Only in cool valleys could any pasture be found (see James v. 17, 18). The end of the drought, like its beginning, was in answer to Elijah's agonising prayer. Its duration was three and a half years. See Luke iv. 25. Teachers may question why the prophet should pray for so dreadful a

manifestation. Study his whole life, wherever his underlying passion is revealed it is this—zeal for Jehovah. And in a day of abounding prosperity no witness of God could have been so impressive as this, associated definitely with His prophet's appearances, and challenging the chief claims of Baal. Obadiah's reference to his saving of the hundred prophets (ver. 13) suggests that Jezebel's terrible slaughter took place before Elijah's first appearance, and may have been the immediate cause of it. Possibly Obadiah met Elijah as he was crossing the plain of Jezreel, near Carmel. The prophets of Baal were more than attendants at the temples; they 'prophesied'—uttered oracles and commands under some spiritual influence. Hence their power for evil. Jezebel was at Jezreel and in this case Ahab, in the fear of the terrible prophet, acted without her co-operation. This accounts for her fierce anger after the events. Study carefully the form of the challenge: 'If Jehovah be Elohim . . . if Baal.' Elohim is the Almighty, Eternal Being. Jehovah; His revelation to Israel. His manifestation at this time in power was the fitting seal to Elijah's mission. But the slaying of Baal's prophets could not cut out the corruption which had eaten into Israel's heart, and though the 'seven thousand' must have rejoiced, the mass of the nation found 'no place of repentance'" (Huntley).

"The spot selected for the trial was also peculiarly suitable. On the slopes of Mount Carmel there was many a natural amphitheatre, where the thousands of Israel could view the decisive contest. There was also, at the eastern end, an unfailing spring of water, fed by the mountain dews, which would be serviceable for the due preparation of the sacrifice. An ancient altar, moreover, stood there, now in ruins, dating back, perhaps, from patriarchal times. Then Carmel's summit commanded an extensive view of the Mediterranean, and from it any sign of approaching rain would be soonest detected. And it was in sight of the royal city of Jezreel, distant some eighteen miles away, where Jezebel, fearing disaster, perhaps, was keeping under her wing the four hundred prophets of the groves" (Meyer).

Aim of this Lesson

That the children may see, as did the Israelites, that the Lord He is God.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Let the children recall what Elijah was doing during the years of famine.

The King—But what was the king doing all this time? Think how he longed to find Elijah and get his revenge by killing him. More than three years went by, and by that time the country was in such a bad state that it was difficult for anyone to live. The king himself was obliged to go up and down the land looking for water for his cattle (xviii. 6). Read his conversation with his steward, Obadiah (xviii. 5), and picture their search for water.

The Prophet—Whether Obadiah found water or not we do not know, but he found something else—he found Elijah! Picture their meeting and Obadiah's terror (xviii. 7), and tell his cry of fear. Why had Elijah not stayed in hiding? Explain that God had now told him to go and meet the king again. Read what he said to Obadiah, Obadiah's objections and Elijah's assurance, xviii. 8-15. Picture the frightened servant running and finding the king and bringing the angry monarch back to where the prophet was waiting (xviii. 16). Vividly picture the two men as they confronted each other. Read the king's question, xviii. 17, and Elijah's accusation and demand, xviii. 18, 19. See that the children appreciate the prophet's fearlessness and understand that it arose from his confidence in God's call, whereas Ahab's wicked life and guilty conscience made him quail in the presence of the man of God. And he meekly obeyed Elijah and sent messages all over the country calling the people to a big meeting on Carmel, the high hill overlooking the sea.

The Challenge—Picture the crowds flocking from all parts of the land to the mountain. Jezebel's priests of her false religion numbered 450—think how many they would look—and hundreds of other people came also. Vividly describe Elijah as he stood alone before this vast company. Read

his opening question, xviii. 21, and imagine the silence that followed. Read his further challenge, xviii. 22-25. (Explain that he was not really the only prophet of the Lord, but he did not know of the others, and he was the only one there that day.)

The Test—Describe in detail how the priests prepared their altar and picture their frenzied calling on their god hour after hour (xviii. 27), and how they became more and more frantic (xviii. 28, 29). But they got no response from their god.

The Decision—Then picture Elijah, calm and dignified, speaking again to the people (xviii. 30). Describe how he now built his altar (xviii. 31, 32), and vividly tell how he had the whole soaked with water. Explain that in spite of the drought there was a spring on that hill which never got dry so there was plenty of water. Then quietly and reverently, not like the idol priests had done, Elijah spoke to his God. Read xviii. 36, 37. Describe the result and its effect on the people (xviii. 38, 39). So once more the people were turned back to God from their idols.

LESSON 34

ON MOUNT AND VINEYARD

1 Kings xix. 1-18 ; xxi. 1-24

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“ Study the story generally first and try to get at its central meaning. Why had Jezebel's message the power to do what all the long hatred of Ahab had never done? Doubtless Elijah was full of hope of a great national revival after Carmel. Now the falsity of Baalism had been laid bare before king and people, might not the worship of Jehovah be restored, and that with the royal sanction? The queen's message meant that all his hopes had failed. Jezebel's influence with the king was stronger than that of truth, and

once again the prophet saw the darkness of idolatry sweeping over the land. His despair belonged to the same temperament as his zeal. Trace the long journey to Horeb. In the wilderness, where neither ravens nor widow could succour him, the angel came. Horeb was the scene of the first great covenant with Israel. Elijah's complaint was, 'They have forsaken Thy covenant.' Study God's threefold answer: (a) The witness of Himself in power—all the forces of Nature at His command—and the greater power of the still small voice able to speak to the heart of man. (b) Then the revelation that there is no failure of His covenant—in the darkest day always a living nucleus from which life can spring afresh. (c) And, lastly, the certainty of judgment on evil, however long deferred. The message of the whole story is that God's purposes are not complete in the little span that one life can cover; but always He is the same, and the task of His workers is not fulfilment, but faithfulness' (Huntley).

“‘The word of the Lord came to Elijah the Tishbite.’ Welcome and important statement; Elijah was not superseded or cast aside because of his momentary failure of faith. He is again commissioned to difficult and honourable service. Ahab had been balked in a pet project. The vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite adjoined the royal garden at Jezreel, and Ahab had set his heart upon it to add to his grounds as a garden of herbs. Naboth, however, was unwilling to part with it, either by sale or exchange, and sturdily refused the king's offer. His refusal was due to deep-rooted principle, for the law of Moses strictly forbade an Israelite to sell his inheritance. All the land of Canaan was looked upon as belonging to God, and each proprietor was responsible to God for the lot or share that had fallen to him. Ahab was greatly angered, both at the refusal and at the fearless loyalty to Jehovah which had inspired it. So like a sulky child, he turned his face to the wall and refused to take food. The strong-minded Jezebel, learning the cause of his annoyance, laughed at him for being balked by one of his own subjects, and at once devised a plan for securing the coveted land. She stirred up a conspiracy against Naboth, who was condemned on a false charge of blasphemy and treason, and

stoned to death. Ahab took possession of his vineyard, chuckling no doubt at the cleverness and daring of his wife. But such an act was not to pass unavenged. A few days afterwards Ahab saw Elijah coming up to him. . . Deliberately and fearlessly Elijah took up the king's words and delivered God's message of awful judgment and retribution" (Meyer).

Aim of this Lesson

To help the children to understand the feeling of God's presence.

Story for the Class

Introduction—What was the sin that Elijah condemned in the Israelites? What was the punishment? We saw last week how they acknowledged their sin and turned again to God—they even killed all those 450 priests of the idol—but still there was famine and no rain in the land.

The Rain—Let the children read the vivid account of the end of the drought, xviii. 41-45. Imagine the relief and joy all over the country. Describe the journey to Jezreel (xviii. 46).

The Threat—The king went straight to his palace where the queen was waiting. Imagine him telling her all that had happened on Carmel (xix. 1). She did not like anything that she heard, but when Ahab told about how her friends the false prophets had been killed, she was furious. Read the message she sent to Elijah, xix. 2. We saw last week that he was not a bit afraid of Ahab, but he was terribly afraid when he heard this. One reason was that he was so tired—think of all he had done the last day or two. And he was so frightened that he forgot God would take care of him, so he ran away.

The Flight—Taking one servant with him he went right out of Ahab's country into the territory of the king of Jerusalem (xix. 3). Even there he did not feel safe, so he went further still, not even telling his servant, whom he now left behind, where he was going. On and on to the south he went, till he was too tired to go any further, so threw himself

down under a tree and wished he might die (xix. 4). Picture him sleeping there, and tell the wonderful experience he had when he waked up (xix. 5, 6). After eating he slept again—tell how the experience was repeated (xix. 7). How kind of God to look after him so! Then he felt stronger so went on and on into wild, barren, hilly country till he came to a lonely cave which he thought would be a good place to stay in. Picture him there.

God's Voice—And now God spoke to him—read what He said and Elijah's reply, xix. 9, 10—help the children to feel sympathy for Elijah's position. Tell what God said next and picture Elijah going out of his cave on to the mountain side (xix. 11). Very vividly describe each part of his four-fold experience there—the wind—the earthquake—the fire—the voice (xix. 11, 12). Describe how Elijah went back to his cave again (xix. 13). Read the question he now heard for the second time, the answer he repeated, and God's reply to this, xix. 13, 14, 15, 18. Now he knew that he was not the only one who worshipped God—7,000 others—what an encouragement that must have been. Also he was no longer tired and, more than all, he had seen God's power and heard His voice. So now when God said to him, "Go return," he at once left his cave and travelled away north again, every day getting nearer and nearer to the terrible queen. But his fear was gone for he knew God was with him and would take care of him.

Prophet and King—At last Elijah came back to Jezreel where the king and queen had a fine summer palace, and there he heard a very sad story. Tell this story to the children as Elijah heard it (xxi. 1-16). Not content with his palace and gardens the king had coveted the next piece of land, too, and when Elijah reached Jezreel all the city was talking about this cruel and selfish act which had only just taken place. Think how the prophet's spirit was stirred by what he heard. Without a moment's hesitation Elijah went straight to poor Naboth's vineyard, and there he met the king in the very act of looking over his newly acquired land. All his fear was gone now, and burning with indignation he stood before Ahab. Read the king's cry of fear and Elijah's bold rebuke, xxi. 20, 21, 23, 24. What terrible words—but

they show us what God feels about such sins as Ahab and Jezebel had committed. Not only had they sinned themselves, but they had made all the people in the land grieve God also. What a terrible thing it is to turn away from God!

LESSON 35

THE PROPHET WHO STOOD ALONE

1 Kings xxii. 1-38

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“The period that succeeded Solomon's death began with a conflict between Israel and Judah, owing to a natural desire on the part of the early Judean kings to recover the lost provinces of their house; but it was mainly occupied by a protracted war between Israel and Syria. Syria entered the war as an ally of Judah, but the hostility between the two Hebrew kingdoms subsequently gave place to better relations, and Judah became Israel's ally against the Syrians. The object which the latter people chiefly had in view in its struggle with Israel was the command of the roads leading, on the one hand to the Mediterranean coast and Egypt, and on the other hand to Arabia along the east side of the Jordan and the Dead Sea. . . (By the time of Jehoshaphat) the earlier hostility between Judah and Israel had given place not only to peace but to friendship, which had been cemented (as appears from 2 Kings viii. 18) by a marriage between Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram and Ahab's daughter Athaliah. It is possible that the change in the relations of the two countries had been brought about by success on the part of the northern kingdom, and that Judah had become a vassal of its neighbour: at any rate, both on this occasion and on a later one (2 Kings iii. 7f.), the king of Judah is found aiding the king of Israel in a war which only promoted the interests of the latter. The

cessation of hostilities between the two kingdoms was in many ways a benefit to both; but for Judah the connexion with Israel was attended by serious drawbacks, for besides having to furnish assistance in war, it became infected with the Baal worship introduced by Ahab. Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab is explicitly condemned in 2 Chron. xix. 2.

"Ramoth in Gilead is situated a little north of the river Jabbok. The city had perhaps been amongst those which had been taken from Omri by Benhadad I, king of Syria, and which his son, Benhadad II, had agreed to restore (xx. 34) . . .

"The prophets must have been prophets of the Lord (xxii. 5, 11), so that though the worship of the Lord (Jehovah) had ceased to be predominant in Israel, it was far from being extinguished, and the prophets had probably recovered some of their influence after the repentance of Ahab recorded in xxi. 27. But though the 400 were doubtless prophets of the true God, they were presumably in sympathy with the prevalent calf-worship, and escaped persecution by tolerating Baal worship" (Dummelow).

Not so Micaiah, the hero of to-day's story. Jehoshaphat was evidently uneasy about the word of the 400 prophets but had apparently too far committed himself to Ahab's proposal to draw back even when Micaiah prophesied evil of the expedition. Study Jehoshaphat's character noting how often his piety is coupled with weakness.

"In several passages in the Old Testament infatuation is ascribed to the influence of an evil spirit from the Lord (see Jud. ix. 23; 1 Sam. xvi. 14; xix. 9), though the personal nature of such a spirit is not generally so clearly implied as here. The lying spirit is regarded as one of God's ministers, occasioning harm, indeed, but in subordination to the divine purposes . . . Zedekiah claimed to be inspired by the Lord and therefore challenged Micaiah to explain how he, likewise professing to speak in the name of the Lord, could utter a prophecy of such different tenor" (Dummelow).

Aim of this Lesson

'To encourage emulation of Micaiah's courage.

Story for the Class

Introduction—On a map show the positions of Samaria, Ahab's capital, and Jerusalem.

Visiting Ahab—Now while Ahab was king in Samaria, the king in Jerusalem was a good and wise king called Jehoshaphat. Once he went to visit his neighbour, King Ahab of Israel (xxii. 2). Tell what Ahab asked Jehoshaphat to do, as follows: "You know the city of Ramoth Gilead on the other side of the river Jordan—it used to belong to our nation but the Syrians fought with us and took it away. Now I want to get it back—will you help me?" What do you think Jehoshaphat would do? Of course he would be glad to help his neighbour in some ways, but if he went to war like this some of his own men were sure to get killed and the war would not help his country at all. What ought he to do? Apparently he was a little afraid to say "no" and did not know if it was right to say "yes". Tell what he said (xxii. 5)—he wanted to know God's will about it before replying.

Calling the Prophets—So king Ahab sent word from the palace that he wanted all the prophets to come—not the Baal prophets but those who professed to worship Jehovah—and quickly 400 men responded to the call. Imagine what a big crowd that would be! Vividly describe the two kings seated in state to interview them in the city gateway, which was the place where all such public gatherings were held (xxii. 10). Tell what Ahab asked them and what they replied (xxii. 6). But Jehoshaphat still felt uneasy—perhaps he knew some of these men who called themselves prophets, and he knew that they did not only worship God and tell His message, but they sometimes worshipped idols. So Jehoshaphat felt uncertain and was not sure of God's will yet. Read what Ahab replied to Jehoshaphat, xxii. 8, and explain the implications of what he said. Evidently Ahab wanted a prophet who would always agree with him and tell him he might do the thing he wanted to do, and this Micaiah would not do—he would only say what he believed God wanted him to say. What a splendid reputation Micaiah had! Jehoshaphat evidently realised that Ahab was unfair to him.

Calling Micaiah—Picture Ahab sending an officer to call Micaiah (xxii. 9) while the rest of the company awaited his arrival. Soon he came and Ahab asked him the same questions he had asked the others, and Micaiah gave the same reply (xxii. 15). But Ahab realised that Micaiah was speaking sarcastically and just repeating that he knew the others had said. Read what Ahab then said to him and what he replied, xxii. 16, 17. Can the children see what Micaiah meant about sheep without a shepherd? (If the king went to battle he would be killed.) Picture Ahab turning to Jehoshaphat and saying, "I told you he would talk like that!" (xxii. 18). How brave it was of Micaiah to speak against all those other prophets! But he said still more—picture him stepping boldly forward, and read his speech to the two kings, xxii. 19–23—he told God's message thus in the form of a vision, and of course when he spoke of the lying spirit all the other prophets knew that he meant they were telling lies. Describe what one of them did and tell what he said (xxii. 24). Read xxii. 25—that was evidently a prophecy of some trouble that would come to Zedekiah as a punishment. Ahab was terribly angry with Micaiah by that time and he determined to punish him—read what he said, xxii. 26, 27. What a terrible order!—do you think Micaiah was sorry he had told God's message faithfully? To begin with he had hoped Ahab might listen for he was sure such a war as he contemplated would be disastrous for the nation; but now he knew his words had been useless—Ahab meant to have his own way whatever God said. Read Micaiah's last word to the king, and to the people, xxii. 28—he did not plead to be let off but repeated again God's message.

Going to Battle—Now what would Jehoshaphat do? Ahab was evidently determined to go and fight—would Jehoshaphat go with him even after what Micaiah had said? He must have felt very unhappy about it, but in spite of knowing what God's will was he agreed to go. Tell the mean thing Ahab now suggested (xxii. 30)—do the children understand why he wanted this? Picture the two kings going at the head of the army into battle. Very soon it happened just as Ahab had hoped—Jehoshaphat saw an enemy about to shoot right at him, so he cried out (xxii. 32). We do not

know what he said, but somehow the enemy recognized that he was not Ahab. And in another minute an arrow from the enemy came and hit Ahab in spite of his disguise. Tell what he cried out (xxii. 34), and briefly tell how he died and was taken back to his palace. Tell the proclamation that was sent out through the army (xxii. 36). Surely that was just exactly what Micaiah had said—remind the children of, xxii. 17. Jehoshaphat must have gone home feeling very conscience-stricken, and poor Micaiah must have felt very sad that no one had paid any attention to his warning and the bad things he had told of had happened. But he was happy in his conscience because he had been brave and done what God said.

LESSON 36

ELISHA AND THE UNSEEN RESOURCES

2 Kings vi. 8-23.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

As this is the only lesson on Elisha that we have in the present course it would be well for the teacher to consider now his whole life. Make a list of the incidents recorded of him. These are not necessarily arranged in Chronological order but are given to show us the character of the man—friendly, patriotic, God-fearing. Read 1 Kings xix. 16, 19-21 ; 2 Kings ii, and several following chapters. Note the position of Dothan on the map, 12 miles north of Samaria lying at the head of a valley shut in by mountains except on the north, the pass by which the Syrians entered.

Contrast Elijah and Elisha. "Elisha was more of a sunny soul ; his faith was clearer and more constant. In his hour of weakness and reaction when threatened with Jezebel's revenge, *Elijah* exclaims, 'I, even I only, am left, and they seek my life to destroy it.' When *Elisha* was in Dothan, surrounded by the revengeful Syrians, he calmed the terrors

of his servant by the memorable reply, 'Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.' *Elisha* was pre-eminently the prophet of vision; he saw the heavenly side of things. *Elijah* saw the abounding sin and idolatry, until his soul burned with indignation" (Webster).

"The circumstances of the story belong to a time of desultory warfare; probably the 'little maid' was only one of many such captives taken at this time. Detachments of the Syrian army moved secretly and rapidly about the hill country between Samaria and Esdraelon. Their aim at this time seems to have been the capture of King Jehoram in his frequent journeys between his palaces of Jezreel and Samaria. Benhadad, who planned the movements of his central host, was not himself necessarily in the field. But though he was well informed as to the plans of Jehoram, he was continually foiled, with an intelligence that could only spring from secret information on the enemy's part. In his plan to take *Elisha* we have the spectacle of a 'blindness' on his part only equalled by the blindness of his host following *Elisha* to Samaria. . . What is the central thing in the lesson? Do not begin by spiritualising. Here was the fact of a host of beings not discernible by physical sight, but recognized by the prophet, and for a moment seen by the servant in answer to prayer. Yet note, there was no battle; their contest with the soldiers of Benhadad was the spiritual touch which so confused the inner sense of things that they failed to understand what their eyes saw. (This is the probable meaning of the word for 'blindness'—'blinding': 'confusion.' A host of literal blind men would have fled in panic, not meekly followed for twelve miles.) The story reveals the fact, apprehended spiritually by many who 'not having seen have believed.' Compare 2 Chron. xxxii. 7; Psalm xxxiv. 7. The history of the Christian Church as well as of the individual Christian is an embodiment of the same fact; weak, surrounded by implacable foes, yet calm and living, and triumphing. The story is wonderfully beautiful for the child. There must, of course, be no attempt at explaining to him any other type of blindness than the literal, even if our explanation could be proved. And there is no need to justify *Elisha's* words to the host; to see any suggestion of untruth here is to miss both the latent

humour and the purpose of the whole. For a real contention with Jehovah, and a real experience of His power, not Dothan, but Samaria, was the place" (Huntley).

Aim of this Lesson

To help the children to realise the power of the unseen.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who remembers the names of the two prophets we have heard about lately? (Elijah and Micaiah) Elijah had a disciple named Elisha, and we shall hear a story about him to-day.

Revealing Secrets—Now it happened while Elisha was living, that the king of Syria brought an army from Damascus to fight against the king of Israel. Imagine the preparations of Jehoram the king of Israel. Just as he was about to go out to reconnoitre, a message came. Tell what this was (vi. 9). Who could have sent it do you think? Elisha. But how did he know? God must have told him. So of course the king was very careful not to run into the trap his enemy had set. Another day came the same message from the prophet, and again King Jehoram was able to keep out of his enemy's way. And yet again the same thing happened—wherever the Syrian king led his army Elisha told King Jehoram of it and so helped him to save himself and his army. Do you not think that was an easy way of fighting?

Looking for a Traitor—But how did the king of Syria like it? He thought "There must be someone in my army who is a traitor and always tells my plans to the Israelites and that is how they always manage to keep out of my way." Picture him assembling his people—read what he said to them and what they answered, vi. 11, 12. So Elisha's fame had spread amongst the Syrians. But what could they do now? Read vi. 13. Imagine how quickly the king ordered out his cavalry. Picture the host galloping away towards Dothan—waiting out of sight till after dark—in the night time silently surrounding the city (vi. 14). Now surely they had the troublesome prophet safe.

Seeing a Vision—What was Elisha doing at the time? Just sleeping all night as usual! But he was waked very suddenly in the morning by his servant bursting into his room. Tell what the frightened servant told Elisha (vi. 15). Imagine the prophet looking out at the scene the servant had described. But Elisha was not a bit frightened—read what he said to the servant, vi. 16. Then he prayed to God. What do you think he prayed for? Safekeeping? No; tell what he prayed (vi. 17). How surprised the servant must have been to hear that prayer for he was not blind? But in a minute he saw something that must have been there all the time but he had not seen it before. Describe what he saw (vi. 17). Do you think he was afraid then?

Leading Blind Men—Nobody else saw that angel host, but they saw the Syrian host march towards Dothan—and then they saw Elisha go out to meet them. As he went he prayed—tell his prayer and the answer (vi. 18). Picture him speaking to their captain and think what the captain asked. Read Elisha's reply, vi. 19. Did the Dothan people smile when they saw the Syrians talking to the very man they wanted to take prisoner and yet not recognising him? Describe the march into Samaria—12 long miles over the mountains, the blind army being led by the man they thought they were going to make prisoner!

Feeding Enemies—Tell what Elisha prayed when they reached Samaria and the answer (vi. 20.) Imagine what the Syrians felt like! Think what a stir their arrival caused in the city and how King Jehoram came in great excitement to Elisha. Read what he said and Elisha's indignant reply, vi. 21, 22. Vividly describe the feast and the departure of the host (vi. 23). Think what they told their master when they got home. No wonder the Syrian king did not fight Jehoram again!

LESSON 37

THE PROPHET WHO SAVED HIS CITY

2 Kings xviii. 9-xix. 36

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"We know comparatively little of the personal life of Isaiah. He was the son of Amoz (Isa. i. 1), and from his influence at court it has been inferred that he was of royal blood, a rabbinic tradition making him nephew to king Amaziah. He was married and had at least two sons to whom were given symbolic names, embodying the substance of his teaching (Isa. vii. 3; viii. 3, 18). Isaiah lived in Jerusalem, and there in close connexion with the king and court and in the centre of the national life, he exercised his ministry. He received his call to be a prophet in the last year of Uzziah (750 B.C.), and his latest prophecies which can be dated with certainty are connected with Sennacherib's invasion of Judah (701 B.C.), so that his ministry extended over a period of at least forty years. How long Isaiah survived the crisis of Sennacherib's invasion we know not, but according to a Jewish tradition . . . he suffered martyrdom by being sawn asunder during the persecution of the true servants of Jehovah under king Manasseh. It is thought that the traditional manner of Isaiah's death may also be alluded to in Heb. xi. 37" (Dummelow).

Consider the period in which Isaiah lived. His youth was spent during the long and prosperous reign of Uzziah—the next period of his life was during the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz—and the reign of Hezekiah forms the third section. The three chief events of Hezekiah's reign were (1) restoration of the Temple; (2) the king's illness and recovery; (3) conflict with Sennacherib. The three records should be read and compared, 2 Kings xviii-xx, 2 Chron. xxix-xxxii, Isaiah xxxvi-xxxix. It is the last of these events which forms our lesson to-day.

"Efforts were apparently made in the early years of Hezekiah's reign to unite the smaller states with Egypt in

order to oppose the Assyrian advance westward. Hoshea, king of Israel, actually allied himself with So (xvii. 4), and a strong party in Judah favoured a like course. This line of policy Isaiah consistently opposed. Earlier he had endeavoured to dissuade Ahaz from committing himself to Assyria and from entangling Judah politically urging him to 'take heed and be quiet' (Isa. vii. 4). Now that Judah had become tributary to Assyria he discouraged the project of



JEWS TAKEN PRISONERS

attempting, in combination with neighbouring states and relying on Egyptian aid, to throw off allegiance, for he saw that prosperity for the future lay in accepting the situation, and that restless plotting against Assyria would involve disaster; 'in returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and confidence shall be your strength,' was the burden of his advice (Isa. xxx. 15). Most especially were his utterances directed against the politicians who looked upon Egypt for support against Assyria, exposing their scepticism, mistrust in Jehovah, and misplaced confidence in material power which could not avail them in the time of need (Isa. xxviii-xxxi)" (Dummelow).

The Assyrian power had come nearer and nearer. Samaria had fallen in the sixth year of Hezekiah's reign xviii. 10, and in his fourteenth year his own territory was

invaded, xviii. 13. Lachish and Libnah were places near the coast on the road between Assyria and Egypt, xviii. 14 and xix. 8. Sennacherib was on his way to Egypt to fight against that country. Even when Hezekiah sent tribute money to him he was evidently afraid to leave so strong a king as Hezekiah unconquered right alongside the only road between Egypt and his own country. Hence his insolent demands of Hezekiah in the message Rabshakeh delivered, xviii. 19-25, and in the letter the second messenger brought, xix. 10-14. The great disaster, xix. 35, to Sennacherib's army probably happened outside Libnah—the main army was there, only a division being sent to Jerusalem with Rabshakeh, and the letter being taken later by merely a messenger with an escort. By what means the angel of the Lord smote them is uncertain though an allusion to the event in an old Egyptian inscription suggests the possibility of plague. This was such a crushing blow to Sennacherib that he gave up all thought of conquering Jerusalem or Egypt and hurried back to his own country. Though he lived for twenty years after this event he never again attempted any foreign expedition.

Aim of this Lesson

To show the fearlessness of Isaiah arising from confidence in God.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who can remember the names of three kings of Jerusalem about whom we have had stories? (David, Solomon, Jehoshaphat) Now we come to another king, Hezekiah; and the prophet who lived in his time was Isaiah.

Hearing Bad News—Hezekiah began his reign by doing great things in Jerusalem. (There is no time to describe these, but encourage the children to read for themselves 2 Chron. xxix.) And through all this time Isaiah was the chief counsellor of the king. Very soon, however, they had other things to think about. News came that the Assyrians had conquered Samaria—that was the place where King Ahab used to be king, and the Assyrians were a big and powerful

nation from away in the east. Of course King Hezekiah was very afraid he would be the next victim, but Isaiah encouraged him to trust in God, saying his city would be kept safe if only he did right. His trusting in God did not mean that he did nothing to protect himself. Briefly tell what his precautions were (2 Chron. xxxii. 3-6), and imagine the terror in Jerusalem when they heard that Judah was actually invaded and refugees began to arrive from the destroyed cities (xviii. 13). Hezekiah's first impulse was to buy off the invader, who was a great king called Sennacherib. So he sent him a great deal of money and even some of the beautiful gold and silver and brass things from the Temple (xviii. 14-16). Sennacherib took the present, but he determined to have Jerusalem also.

Receiving Sennacherib's Messengers—Describe how Sennacherib's army was lying away to the west near the sea beyond the hills, and no doubt Hezekiah's soldiers were constantly watching in that direction. At last one day their fears were realised—a big army under three generals marched up to Jerusalem (xviii. 17). Picture how quickly the gates were all shut while Hezekiah gave an order that no one was to speak to the enemies (xviii. 36). Describe vividly how the Assyrian general called for Hezekiah and how three great men of the city went to meet him (xviii. 18). When the Assyrians began to talk Hezekiah's three representatives asked them to speak in another language which the common people did not know—they were afraid the people would get too frightened if they heard what terrible threats the Assyrians made (xviii. 26). But that only made the general, Rabshakeh, shout all the louder, still in the language everyone knew. Give the gist of what he said, especially pointing out how he taunted them with trusting in God (xviii. 19-35). But his words were received in dead silence by the people in the city according to Hezekiah's command (xviii. 36).

Praying to God—Picture the three men carrying the Assyrian message to the king with their clothes all torn, which was their sign of mourning (xviii. 37), and tell how Hezekiah when he got the news also put on the signs of mourning and went to the Temple to pray (xix. 1). Describe the sad procession which he sent to find Isaiah the prophet (xix. 2). Read Isaiah's reply to Hezekiah, xix. 6, 7, and help the

children to understand what a comfort this must have been to them all.

A Letter from Sennacherib—Apparently Rabshakeh made no further trouble then but went quietly back to tell Sennacherib what had happened at Jerusalem, and Hezekiah hoped he would never see the Assyrians again (xix. 8). But although he still kept on praying they soon came back again, and this time they brought a letter from Sennacherib which just repeated some of the things Rabshakeh had said (xix. 10-13). The Assyrians talked a great deal about what they would do, but they really hesitated to fight against Jerusalem for they knew what a strong city it was, and apparently they went back to their camp after delivering the letter. But Hezekiah was troubled by this letter. Picture him receiving and reading it, and at once going again to the Temple to pray about it, (xix. 14-19). Read his prayer, xix. 15-19. Tell how again a message came from Isaiah encouraging them still to trust in God. Evidently Isaiah was spending his time in prayer, asking God to help them, and then he sent these encouraging messages to the king. Read part of this message—xix. 20, 29-34. Because of these messages from Isaiah the king was able to persuade his people to do just as he told them, and he himself did just what Isaiah said.

Deliverance—Comforted, but still anxious, Hezekiah and his people waited for further news of Sennacherib. In spite of all his bold words no army came against Jerusalem. How long Hezekiah was left in uncertainty we do not know, but soon his scouts, who had left the city to discover what the enemy were doing, came back with an astonishing story. Tell the news they brought of the disaster that had come to the invading army on the very night when Hezekiah had received Sennacherib's impertinent letter (xix. 35). We do not know any more than that as to what had happened to that great army, but perhaps it was plague that broke out and destroyed them so suddenly. And as the remainder of the army with their king Sennacherib, made their way back home (xix. 36), Hezekiah realized that God had delivered those who trusted in Him and that Isaiah had truly represented God to the people.

LESSON 38

A DISCOVERY AND ITS RESULTS

2 Kings xxii. 1—xxiii. 3.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“This is a lesson of peculiar interest. The finding of the Book of the Law by Hilkiah undoubtedly marks an epoch in Israel. But the epoch that some have discerned looms much larger than the thoughtful reader could discover for himself. Obviously the record implies that neither priest nor king had any scruple about owning the authority of the Book. And what was the Book? The passages (from Deut.) referred to in the Lesson Story, as well as many others that may be discovered, suggest that attention concentrated on that Book. But they by no means exclude the possibility that the Five Books were all in the Roll. The reference to ‘all the words of the book of the Covenant’ (xxiii. 2) may certainly imply a book within a book, e.g., Deut. xxix. 1. It is of great interest to note how the ideals of Deuteronomy became the standards against which the compiler of the Books of Kings measures the records of his nation. What else should we expect of one to whom the Word of the Book was verily the Light of God?” (Huntley).

For various reasons it was not till the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign that any attempt was “made to put the Temple into a good state of repair. As it was roofed with cedar tiles, constant attention was needed to keep it in order. Nearly a hundred years had passed since Jehoash and Jehoiada had thoroughly renovated the building, and when this had been done there were no funds left with which to make any vessel of gold or of silver for the Temple use. The treasury chests, one placed beside the altar, and the other at the gate of exit, were, however, retained from that time, the monies dropped therein being stored in one of the two holy chambers of the Sanctuary. The king now appointed a commission and gave orders that Hilkiah was to sum up this money, and entrust it to the men forming a deputation to Hilkiah, who

were to employ workmen—carpenters, stone-cutters and builders—to amend and repair the house. In the prosecution of this work of restoration, it became necessary that the innermost chamber of the Temple should be swept and purified, and the Ark placed therein. Into this chamber the High Priest alone might enter. Hilki'ah, the High Priest, accordingly undertook the work, and, in doing it, made a discovery of singular importance. It was no less than the recovery of an ancient manuscript lying within the Ark of the Covenant, called indifferently 'The Book of the Law' and 'The Book of the Covenant' (xxii. 8, xxiii. 2) " (Caldecott).

Consider the people connected with this incident—Shaphan and Ahikam, Hilki'ah, Achbor, Huldah. Note the influence of Huldah and compare her with other prophetesses of the Old Testament—Miriam ; Deborah ; Noadiah, Neh. vi. 14.

Aim of this Lesson

To show the value of God's Book.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Which king of Jerusalem built the beautiful Temple ? (Solomon) But sad to say after him came some kings who did not care about the Temple nor about God's worship. We have heard about two—Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah—who were good kings and taught the people to worship God, but after them again came others who were careless and even allowed idol worship in Jerusalem. But then came another king who though he was only a boy when he began to reign, determined to worship only God.

Cleaning the Temple—One of the first things that was necessary in this reformation was to get the Temple fit for worship again. The last two kings had been very careless about this and one of them had even put an idol right inside the Temple. Josiah, the boy king, soon saw that if his nation was to be a good nation their worship must be pure and good, so the Temple must be cleaned. So one day he called to him his chief councillor, Shaphan, and told him to go and ask the high priest how much money he had in the

Temple—was there enough to pay for the necessary repairs? (xxii. 4). When they counted the money they found there was plenty, so quickly the order was given and the work was begun. Vividly picture it being done (xxii. 5, 6). Rubbish had to be cleared out and anything to do with idol worship, and then the roof, walls and floor were carefully examined and all bad places mended.

Cleaning the Holy Place—Now there was one room in the Temple called the Holy Place, into which only priests might go. Other people had been in lately, and it was in there that the idol was put up. And while all this repairing was going on, the high priest took charge of the work in that particular room. Imagine him indignantly turning out the idol and perhaps getting other priests to help him to scrape the walls and sweep the floor while he carefully examined the furniture. Let the children recall the fact that the Ark of the Covenant was in this room (1 Kings viii. 4-9) and in it were the special national relics. How reverently Hilkiah, the high priest, must have handled these and dusted them. All at once he uttered a cry of surprise—he had evidently found something very special.

The Long-Lost Book—Without waiting to talk about it to his helpers he hurried away to find Shaphan, the king's councillor. Tell what he said to him (xxii. 8) and imagine the two men going to some private room and there Hilkiah uncovered the treasure he had found. It was an old book. Together they turned its pages and read it and then they began to realise that they had indeed found a wonderful treasure. It was a book they had often heard old people talk about but everyone thought it was lost for ever—it was the law Moses had given them! It could hardly have been the whole of the books of Moses—perhaps the story part had not been lost, only the law part—but this was the law. And that partly explained why such bad things were being done in the nation—their law book had been lost and the people did not know what God's commands were. "This is very important" said the two men, "the king must see it at once."

The King and the Book—Think how carefully and reverently Shaphan took the book from Hilkiah and carried it to

the king. Read what he said to Josiah, xxii. 9, 10, and picture him reading the book to the king. Vividly describe the king's action (xxii. 11) explaining that tearing their clothes was a sign of grief, and the king was grieved that God's law had not been obeyed. Quickly he called in the high priest and three more of his councillors and told them to find out what God wanted them to do now (xxii. 12, 13).

The Prophetess and the Book—Picture the five men consulting about what to do—remembering a very godly woman living in Jerusalem—deciding to go to her—making their way to her house—telling her what had happened (xxii. 14). Imagine with what dignity and authority she replied to them. Let older classes read her declaration, xxii. 15-20—to younger classes give the gist of it and describe the return of the five men with their message to the king.

The People and the Book—Describe vividly the great company called by the king to Jerusalem, and how they listened to the reading of the book (xxiii. 1, 2). Picture the king standing by the pillar in front of the Temple, the spot appointed for him by the law, and read the covenant he proposed, xxiii. 3. Tell of the people's response. And that lost book is part of our Bible to-day—they never lost it again. In conclusion the children might be encouraged in daily Bible reading lest they become guilty of neglecting so valuable a book.

LESSON 39

THE PROPHET WHO DEFIED THE KING

Jeremiah xxxvi.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Our lesson chapter gives a vivid picture of a book in the making. It was possibly the refusal of the people to listen to Jeremiah's preaching that first suggested the thought of writing down his messages. The chamber in which the roll

was read—probably from a window overlooking the crowds, xxxvi. 10—was in the large new gate that stood between the main Temple Court and the New Court which had been recently added. Since three times over the book was read through at a sitting it is clear that not much was yet written ; it is thought that chapters ii–vi may have been the contents of this first roll. We see clearly in the history of Jeremiah that there were at this time two parties in the kingdom ; there were those nobles who sided with the king and those who were a reforming party and always helped and befriended the prophet. Chief among the latter were the family of Shaphan. He had been a leading counsellor of the young king Josiah in his efforts at reform, see last lesson, and now his sons—Ahikam, xxvi. 24, and Gemariah, xxxvi. 10, 25—followed his example. His grandsons also carried on the family traditions—Micaiah, xxxvi. 11, and Gedaliah, xxxix. 14 ; xl. 5, 6 ; etc. Micaiah could have been little more than a boy at the time of to-day's story.

“For some time after the conflict with Pashur, Jeremiah appears to have remained in seclusion. Indeed he was forced to keep out of sight because of the combined animosity of the king and the priesthood. His protectors were able to aid him as long as he actually remained away from the Temple and other places of public resort (cp. xxvi. 24 with xxxvi. 5). Such seclusion, however did not necessitate inaction. A glimpse into the prophet's chamber at this time which we are given is peculiarly interesting. Baruch, a trusted disciple, sits with him engaged in a new enterprise. Restrained from uttering his message directly in the ears of the people, Jeremiah has felt impelled to gather together in a collected form the prophecies of the twenty-three preceding years. Now a man of nearly forty-five years of age he sits wrapped in meditation while the words spoken long ago come back to his memory. Some of them may have been written at the time, but since most were in poetical form it would not be impossible to recall at least the most memorable passages in them. And while the soul of the prophet is borne along by the impulse of the Divine Spirit, Baruch writes the words upon rolls of skin spread out before him. Later, when the princes asked Baruch, ‘How didst thou write all these words

at his mouth?' the young man replied, 'He pronounced all the words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book,' indicating the fidelity with which he carried out his task'' (*Jeremiah* by E. A. Annett).

Aim of this Lesson

To deepen the children's interest in the Bible itself.

Story for the Class

Introduction—What was the name of the good young king we heard about last week? (Josiah) Like so many of these kings he had a prophet living during his reign who used to help and advise him and give God's messages. This prophet's name was Jeremiah. Can the children recall the names of all the prophets we have been hearing about? (Elijah, Micaiah, Elisha, Isaiah).

Writing a Book—But King Josiah was killed in battle while he was still quite a young man, and then came another king who was not a bit interested in the Temple or God's worship—in fact he was very unkind to Jeremiah and persecuted him in many ways. That made all the people, also, reject the messages that Jeremiah brought from God, and soon the prophet had to hide himself from the king! Imagine the sorrow of Jeremiah as he found all his warnings and messages rejected and picture him in hiding (xxxvi. 5). He did not leave Jerusalem, but lived in some tiny room in a back street where the king would never hear of him nor think of looking. There he could pray to God about his work. Then tell how a thought came to him from God, and read xxxvi. 2, 3. At once he prepared to obey and sent for his friend, Baruch, to write everything down for him. Describe the book in which Baruch wrote—a long strip of parchment which was kept rolled up on a stick and was therefore called a roll. Picture them sitting together and Baruch writing everything down as Jeremiah repeated to him all he had been saying to the people. It must have taken many days to write it all, but they were evidently in a secluded place and could work without being disturbed. As a sample of the sort

of things that were written in the book let the class read iii. 21-25.

Reading it in the Temple—At last the book was finished and Jeremiah sent Baruch to read it to all the people gathered at the Temple on some special day of worship (xxxvi. 6, 7). Picture the scene as he did so—he knew which day the greatest company would be present and going there then he selected a prominent place (xxxvi. 10) and read the book so that great crowds could hear him.

Reading it to the Princes—Among those who heard Baruch was a young noble called Micaiah (the same name as the prophet we heard about a few weeks ago.) He was greatly impressed by what he heard and went at once to tell his father and a number of other princes who were met together in one of the rooms in the king's palace (xxxvi. 11, 12). Describe how he told them all he had heard (xxxvi. 13) and think how excited he was about it. Tell how Jehudi, one of their number, was sent to find Baruch and ask him to come and read his book to the princes. Picture him coming to the palace with Jehudi—being welcomed by the princes—sitting down among them—and reading his book through again to them (xxxvi. 14, 15). The princes saw at once that this was likely to have great influence among the people and that the king ought to know about it, so they carefully enquired from Baruch just how he had got all these words from Jeremiah (xxxvi. 16-18). Having got from him all the information they could they recommended him to go into hiding with Jeremiah till they knew what the king would say about the book (xxxvi. 19). Think how he hurried back to his friend and told him all about what had happened, and imagine the two men waiting in hiding somewhere for further news of their book.

Reading it to the King—Baruch had, of course, left the precious book with the princes and they now carefully put it away in one of their rooms and then went in a body to tell the young king, Jehoiakim, about it (xxxvi. 20). They were evidently very much afraid of what he might do for he had never liked Jeremiah and his preaching, and it was probably in a very nervous and hesitating manner that they told him the contents of the book. Tell how immediately Jehoiakim

wanted to see it for himself and sent Jehudi to fetch it. Jehudi at once brought it and began reading it to him (xxxvi. 21). Picture the scene very vividly—the bright fire and the king warming himself beside it while the prince read to him—the sudden anger of the king when only a little had been read—how he snatched the book from Jehudi and began cutting it up, while three of the princes besought him to keep calm and not do such a dreadful thing as destroy the book—how he threw it in the fire and told three of his officers to go and bring Jeremiah and Baruch to him as prisoners (xxxvi. 22–26). But they never found the two men. And when Jeremiah and Baruch heard what had happened to their book they just set to work to write it all out again and a good deal more besides. And that was the beginning of the book of Jeremiah in the Bible to-day. How much we ought to value a book that was written under such difficulties as that!

LESSON 40

SUFFERING FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS SAKE

Jeremiah xxxviii.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

“Zedekiah was the youngest son of Josiah, well disposed, but utterly weak. He showed more disposition than his predecessors had done to consult with Jeremiah (xxxvii. 17–21; xxxviii. 14–28), and under his advice to submit to Babylon. On the other hand he was devoid of any real zeal for religion and yielded now to the suggestions of the prophet, now to those of the princes who advocated resistance either single-handed or in alliance with Egypt. Thus he was virtually powerless against the strong wills and more vigorous leaders opposed to him (xxxviii. 5, 25) . . . At the beginning of the ninth year of Zedekiah a Chaldean army laid siege to Jerusalem. Jeremiah had already from time to time worn a

yoke upon his neck, symbolic of the coming servitude (xxvii. 2), and when the false prophet, Hananiah, who promised deliverance, had broken the yoke (xxviii. 10), he received the sentence of speedy death at the mouth of Jeremiah (xxviii. 16), because he had, spoken rebellion against the Lord.' It was natural for self-reliant, irreligious men to be highly displeased with such acts and words as these, and much persecution, including imprisonment, fell to the prophet's lot in consequence, the king being too weak to give him any permanent support (xxxvii. 11-21.) In the eleventh year of Zedekiah, 586 B.C., the city was sacked and the Temple burnt. Zedekiah's eyes were put out, and he was brought to Babylon, and immured in a dungeon, apparently till his death'' (Dummelow).

In the period of this week's lesson we find Jeremiah's condition changed from that of last week, for he had been imprisoned. Read the story of how he was taken on a false charge and imprisoned in the house of Jonathan the scribe, xxxvii. 11-15. From there he was transferred to the court of the prison in response to his plea to the king, xxxvii. 16-21. There he was still able to get his messages to the people and to make his influence felt and it was that fact that made the nobles ask the king to order the death of the prophet or a more rigorous confinement, xxxviii. 1-5. Note the position and nature of his next prison, xxxviii. 6. He apparently had now more enemies than friends among the princes, xxxviii. 4, and it was from among the palace servants that succour came to him this time. We find him still strongly advocating what he knew to be the right course—it was too late to stand out against Babylonia, the nation was in submission to that empire, xxxviii. 17-23. This appeal also Zedekiah refused and the city was destroyed as Jeremiah foresaw, 2 Chron. xxxvi. 13, 17-20, Jer. xxxix. 1-10. At the fall of the city Jeremiah was released, xxxix. 11-14.

Aim of this Lesson

To show that those who trust in God may be confident of help under all circumstances.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Do the children remember where Jeremiah was in last week's lesson? (in hiding). Why was he hiding?

The Prisoner—This week we find everything in Jerusalem changed. The king and the people had paid no attention to Jeremiah's warnings—instead of trusting God they had trusted in their own intrigues against other nations and these had failed. Then a great king of a country in the east, called Nebuchadnezzar, had come and taken away their king and put another one in his place, Zedekiah, another son of king Josiah, who now promised to obey Nebuchadnezzar. And Jeremiah himself was a prisoner, but not in the hands of Nebuchadnezzar—Zedekiah, the king of Jerusalem, had shut Jeremiah up in prison. The reason was this—Jeremiah saw that Zedekiah did not mean to keep his promise to Nebuchadnezzar but was going to rebel against him. Now he was not strong enough to do this and if he tried to do so the probability was that Nebuchadnezzar would come and destroy Jerusalem and many of the people would be killed. So Jeremiah urged him to submit to Nebuchadnezzar. But Zedekiah pretended to think that this was because Jeremiah was friendly with Nebuchadnezzar, so he shut him up in prison. But still from his prison Jeremiah managed to get messages taken to the people in the city (xxxviii. 2, 3). Tell how this made his enemies very angry—how they went to Zedekiah and asked him to have the prophet killed (xxxviii. 4)—and how they were told to do as they liked with him (xxxviii. 5.) Zedekiah evidently would not take the responsibility of doing anything himself—he clearly had some respect for Jeremiah and faith in his messages, but was too weak and cowardly to stand against the princes. They also were evidently afraid to kill him straight away, but they determined to put him in such a bad dungeon that he was sure to die there. Describe the place where they put him—apparently a deep pit full of slime and filth which was situated somewhere in the precincts of the jail (xxxviii. 6).

The African Friend—Last week we saw that Jeremiah had friends among the princes who could help him, but now these seemed all to be gone or else they were cowardly and

afraid to speak. There was only one man who was brave enough to try and help the persecuted prophet—an African slave named Ebedmelech (xxxviii. 7). He was very grieved when he heard what was done to Jeremiah and at once sought means to help him. But what could he do?—he had no power or influence. Then he decided on a very bold course. Describe how he went to the king (xxxviii. 8) and read what he said to him, xxxviii. 9. Read also the king's reply, xxxviii. 10, and imagine how gladly and quickly Ebedmelech obeyed. Picture vividly how they got Jeremiah out of the dungeon (xxxviii. 11-13). Tell the message God sent to Ebedmelech (xxxix. 15-18).

The Interview with the King—Evidently Zedekiah's conscience was very uneasy about his conduct generally and especially his treatment of the prophet, and he determined once more to have an interview with Jeremiah. Picture him going to a secluded place between his palace and the Temple and sending for the prisoner (xxxviii. 14). Let the children read their conversation, xxxviii. 15-23. Jeremiah did not trust Zedekiah and would not speak till he had promised not to kill him. Then he again urged him not to set himself against Nebuchadnezzar but to do all that that king commanded him. But Zedekiah would give no promise—he was afraid of the princes and even asked Jeremiah to keep absolutely secret what they had talked about—he might tell the princes he had begged for his life, but nothing more (xxxviii. 24-26). Describe how as soon as Jeremiah got back to his prison the princes came to hear all about his talk with the king, but he kept his secret safe (xxxviii. 27).

Released—In spite of all Jeremiah's pleadings Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar, and just as the prophet had said, a big army was brought against Jerusalem and the city this time was conquered and destroyed. Very briefly describe what happened (2 Chron. xxxvi. 17-20), and imagine the things Jeremiah saw and heard from his prison in the heart of the city—perhaps it was well for him he was shut up there, for if he had seen all that was done it would have broken his heart. How Nebuchadnezzar, the conqueror, heard of him we do not know, but evidently he knew he was a good man who ought not to be in prison, so he ordered Jeremiah's release, and

allowed him to go back to his home. And if only the people of Jerusalem had listened to the words of the prophet none of these terrible things would have happened to their city.

LESSON 41

DARING THE KING'S WRATH

Daniel i

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Note the time when Daniel was taken captive, i. 1—it would appear that Nebuchadnezzar carried away captives at the first invasion of Judah and before the final subjugation of Jerusalem. Consider the type of boy that Nebuchadnezzar wanted, i. 3, 4. His purpose was to strengthen the empire by having men of every conquered race at his capital and thus surrounding himself with those whose interest was to keep him safe. See the position of Babylon on the map—it had been built long before, but it was Nebuchadnezzar who made it the magnificent city it then was, iv. 30. Note the distance between Jerusalem and Babylon. The route travelled would be northward to the Euphrates, then following the river's course, about 800 miles. For the time the journey would take, see Ezra vii. 9. Cyrus, i. 21, was the Persian king who overthrew the Babylonian Empire nearly 70 years later, so Daniel evidently lived to be a very old man, but was quite a boy when he was taken captive. Pulse, i. 12, a favourite food with the Hebrews, was very like Indian dhal. The name given to Daniel in Babylon, i. 7, contained the name of the Babylonian god Bel—perhaps that was why he did not use that name, though his three friends all used their new names. Consider what sort of a boy Daniel must have been to be such a favourite with Melzar, i. 9. Chaldeans, i. 4, were the people originally living round the north of the Persian Gulf, from whom the Assyrians and Babylonians were descended. The name was often used to denote either of

these nations, but it came gradually to mean astrologers and soothsayers rather than any one nation ; see ii. 2, 10.

Aim of this Lesson

To encourage emulation of the fine qualities shewn in Daniel.

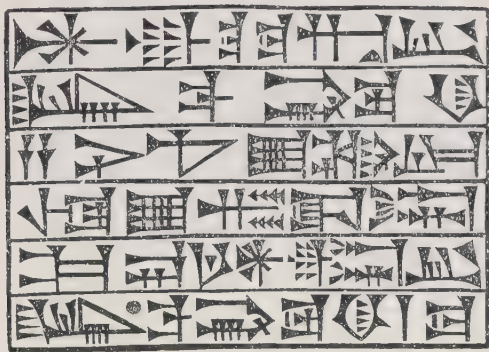
Story for the Class

Introduction—What was the name of the king who conquered Jerusalem ? (Nebuchadnezzar.)

Taken Prisoner—Another thing which Nebuchadnezzar did was to take away to his own city of Babylon a number of prisoners. Amongst these prisoners were some boys, belonging to noble families in Jerusalem, who were to be trained for Government positions (i. 3, 4)—they were the best boys from the best families—think how his officers set to work to find these lads. No house could be closed against them, but all were searched for boys. The king did not want any who were crippled or had anything at all the matter with them, so all the boys were carefully examined—imagine how some of them wished they had some physical blemish so that they would not be taken away from home. At last the officers had enough boys, and these along with the ordinary prisoners of war were marched out of Jerusalem and started on their long journey. Tell especially of Daniel and his three friends—picture their parting from their families and the sorrow with which they started. But they were evidently well looked after and given good food on the way and the interest of the journey would soon claim their attention—perhaps the fathers and uncles of some of them were among the prisoners also. Describe their route and the things they were likely to see on the way, and imagine the excitement of all, captors and captives alike, when at last they reached the great and wonderful city of Babylon and marched into it by one of its brazen gates.

At School in Babylon—We do not know what happened to most of the prisoners, but the boys were taken to the king's

palace and there they were treated just like princes. No doubt they had to dress like Babylonian princes and they had royal food sent to them from Nebuchadnezzar's table. The first thing they had to learn was the Babylonian language—think how good teachers were appointed and how they were



BABYLONIAN WRITING

soon able to talk with the Babylonian princes and others they met in the palace and in the city. And then there were many other subjects to study—think what these would be. These people knew a great deal about the stars, so the boys would have to learn astronomy. They would have to learn the laws of the country, the geography of the empire, arithmetic. They would be expected to learn about the religion, too, and perhaps some of the boys began to worship the idols that the Babylonian people worshipped. But Daniel and his three friends could never be persuaded to do this—they might learn about the gods, but they never worshipped them. Another difficulty these four had was the food—describe this and the arrangement they made with the steward (i. 8–15). Notice how polite they were about it—they did not refuse the king's food, but requested to be allowed to eat something else. The wine, also, they objected to. Think what splendid boys they

must have been for this steward to become so fond of them. The stand they took about the food indicates to us their attitude towards everything else that they felt unwise or wrong, and thus they kept themselves healthy in body and pure in mind, while some of the other boys from Jerusalem cared about nothing but having a good time even if they neglected their studies. Do the children think Daniel enjoyed his three years of school life in Babylon?

Examined by the King—At last the time of the examination drew near. Do you like examinations? But you never had an examination like this one. Explain that the king himself was the examiner and the boys had to come before him to be questioned by him personally (i. 18, 19). Think of the excitement and nervousness as they got ready that morning and were then marched before the king in some big room in the palace. Imagine the things he talked about with them, asking questions about all sorts of subjects and generally testing their intelligence. We do not know how many boys there were altogether, nor how long the king kept them before him; but Daniel and his three friends were top in the examination. Read i. 17, 20. Point out that this does not mean that God has favourites, but that because they had specially tried to please God they had been able to learn more quickly than the others and to understand their subjects better. Would that be true of any of us?

LESSON 42

DARING THE FIERY FURNACE

Daniel iii.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

How long a time elapsed between the promotion of the four young Jews and this incident it is impossible to say. The chronology is very confusing. "The second year (ii. 1) seems inconsistent with the statement in i. 5 that Daniel and

his companions were under training during three years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign. But it appears from the monuments that the Babylonian kings counted the year after their accession as their first year. The 'second' year might therefore be really the third, while the 'three years' of i. 5 might include, by another mode of reckoning, the year of accession, the following year, and part of the next. The 'three years' might, therefore, be over before the end of the 'second year' " (Dummelow).

Note the disproportionate size of Nebuchadnezzar's image, iii. 1. Had the image been suggested to him by his dream? The kings of those times had a weakness for producing statues of themselves and this was doubtless a representation of Nebuchadnezzar himself. In Egypt they were particularly fond of these great statues, each king having many erected; there are still great numbers of them extant. Babylon has fewer ruins of any kind than Nineveh and other cities because of the absence of stone—the buildings were of sun-baked bricks which have largely disintegrated. Consider Nebuchadnezzar's sudden and enthusiastic advocacy of the worship of Jehovah, iii. 29, and iv. 2, 37. This did not necessitate giving up his own gods—the idea of gods in those days was that each nation or tribe or tract of country had its own deity but some were stronger than others and it was wise to worship more than one. Compare Isaiah xxxvii. 12. Compare Daniel's position in Babylon with Joseph's in Egypt, and Mordecai's in Shushan.

Aim of this Lesson

To encourage confidence in God under difficult circumstances.

Story for the Class

Introduction—What were the names of the four Jewish boys we heard of last week?

Worshipping the Image—It was about the time that they were promoted that the king called for a great feast which was to be partly religious and partly social. The object to be

worshipped was a great golden image of the king himself. Describe it and the place where it was set up (iii. 1). Think how the king sent word all over the country and tell who were called together for the occasion (iii. 2.) Picture them coming and imagine the pomp and splendour of the scene as they gathered on the maidan around the image (iii. 3.) Read the king's proclamation, iii. 4-6, and vividly describe what followed (iii. 7.) Help the children to appreciate the excitement and gaiety of the scene.

Complaining to the King—Of course among those who gathered at the king's command were a number of Jews and some doubtless did as the Babylonians did in order not to attract attention. But not so all. Tell of the three who were still as staunch and true as when they came as boys to the palace—Daniel was apparently not there that day. It was hardly possible that foreigners such as these should have risen to such high places without arousing jealousy amongst the courtiers and there were those among the throng that day who rejoiced to see these men disobeying the king and they determined to use their knowledge to their own advantage. Picture a group of them approaching the king (iii. 8), and read their accusation, iii. 9-12.

Punishing the Offenders—Describe what happened next and picture the three standing before the king (iii. 13). Read what Nebuchadnezzar said, iii. 14, 15, and their reply iii. 16-18. Help the children to realise their heroism in replying thus when confronted with such danger. Tell of Nebuchadnezzar's rage and the punishment of the three bold men (iii. 19-23.) Apparently the king watched the carrying out of the sentence, gloating over the fact that he had so quickly put a stop to their insubordination, but his satisfaction gradually gave way to surprise and fear. Picture him hastily springing up and calling to some of his courtiers—read what he said, iii. 24, 25. Vividly picture the final scene as the men came out unhurt (iii. 26, 27), and read the king's declaration, iii. 28, 29. So their fearless trust in God not only led to their own safety but others came to realise what a great God was Jehovah. Read Isaiah xliii. 2.

LESSON 43

DARING TO PRAY

Daniel vi.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

'The historical events of the period we are studying are difficult to determine. The book of Daniel gives no ordered narrative, merely a collection of isolated events, with the dates affixed to some of the prophecies, vii. 1 ; viii. 1 ; ix. 1 ; x. 1 ; xi. 1. Nebuchadnezzar reigned for 37 years after his first conquest of Jerusalem, 2 Kings xxv. 27, and after his death the empire quickly fell to pieces. It was the intrigues and conspiracies inside the empire that made the Persian conquest easy. Persia had been gradually coming into prominence in eastern politics, but it was under Cyrus that she suddenly sprang into the front rank as a world power. The manner of the conquest of Babylon is shrouded in uncertainty—Daniel merely mentions its fall, v. 30, 31. The city was too well fortified to be easily captured, and it was that fact that accounted for Belshazzar feasting while the enemy's troops surrounded his city. Daniel, more far-seeing, recognised the danger and correctly interpreted the signs. Note the still higher position given to Daniel by the Persian king, vi. 1-3, and the prophet's great influence with him, vi. 14-18. There is not much wonder that the jealousy of other courtiers was aroused still further. Consider the tribute to Daniel's character in vi. 4, 5. The Medes and Persians prided themselves on the fact that their laws could never be altered, vi. 8, hence the strength of this decree. Lion hunting was always a favourite pastime with Babylonian and Assyrian kings and they always liked to have some of these animals in captivity near the palaces. They were usually kept in large pits or caves with heavy stones over the entrances, vi. 17. A favourite decoration in the palaces was relief carvings all round the stone walls of the principal rooms and these frequently represented hunting parties when the king and his courtiers were stalking and killing lions. Among the ruins of

Babylon and Nineveh have been found many seals. vi. 17, pieces of stone, generally cornelian, with the king's name or sign on them, with which he signed documents, etc. Study the Jews' habit of prayer, Psa. lv. 17, and compare with Moslems in India to-day.

Aim of this Lesson

To increase the children's admiration for Daniel's fidelity to God under all circumstances.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Who was the great king of Babylon about whom we have had so many stories? (Nebuchadnezzar) Soon after he died another king from further east still came and conquered Babylon, just as Nebuchadnezzar had conquered Jerusalem so long ago.

The First of the Presidents—Imagine how the conqueror began settling his new dominions. Tell of the 120 princes each in charge of a district, like Collectors or Commissioners in India, and of the three presidents or governors who were over them. And of these presidents Daniel was made the chief! Evidently the new king soon realized what a splendid and reliable man Daniel was—many kings would have got rid of all those who had held positions of importance under a conquered king, but Daniel was too good a man to be lost—tell why they thought so highly of him (vi. 3). But although everyone knew he was a good and just ruler that did not mean they all liked him—some were very jealous of him. This jealousy had already shown itself as we saw in the last lesson about his three friends, and now no doubt some of the Persian courtiers, as well as the Babylonians, were jealous of Daniel. Do the children think his life was easy and pleasant?

The Plot—Tell how the jealousy of his enemies reached such a pitch that they determined somehow to get rid of him. But read what they said about him, vi. 4, 5, and see that the children appreciate the tribute this was to Daniel's character. Then describe in detail the cunning plot they laid to catch

him. Picture them going to the king and pretending that all they wanted was to honour him. Read what they said, vi. 7, 8, and think how this was written down and then signed by the king who was greatly flattered by their words. But how was this going to affect Daniel?

The Spies—Now it was well-known in Babylon that Daniel was a very religious man—he did not worship idols, but he had three regular times every day when he prayed to his own God. He always did so in one of his rooms which had a window opening to the west and by that open window he always prayed, thinking as he did so of his nation's Temple in Jerusalem away beyond the horizon, and doubtless praying for that city. And the question now was whether he would still continue that practice when he heard of the king's new order. His enemies took care that he knew of this decree and then they watched to see what he would do. Imagine how they watched—apparently all of them acted as spies (vi. 11). Were they stationed in Daniel's own garden? Or could they see into Daniel's windows from one of their own houses? But of course they kept themselves out of sight. Tell vividly what they saw. Then, gloating over the fact that everything had happened just as they hoped, they went back to the king. Read what passed between them, vi. 12, 13, and describe the king's displeasure as he saw that he had been tricked. Think what means the king took all that day to save Daniel, but in vain—his own hand had signed the decree and it could not be changed, not even by him (vi. 14). Daniel's enemies evidently began to be afraid that the king somehow would evade the law so in the evening they waited upon him again to remind him that his law could not be changed, so the king had to yield (vi. 15).

The Revenge—Picture vividly how Daniel was arrested and brought to the lions' cave while king Darius stood looking on. Read what the king said, vi. 16, and describe how the cave was fastened and sealed so as to satisfy these jealous princes (vi. 17). Tell how the king spent the night which followed—help the children to understand his remorse (vi. 18). Very graphically describe the events of the morning—the king's early visit to the cave and the tone of voice in which he spoke. Read what he said, vi. 20, and what Daniel

replied, vi. 22. Then picture the king's transport of joy and relief and tell of the two orders that he gave (vi. 23, 24). Read the proclamation which he wrote and sent to all his dominions, vi. 25-27, and picture Daniel once more restored to his office, more respected and admired than ever by all the other people living in Babylon. Discuss with the children what elements in Daniel's character they most admire.

LESSON 44

REBUILDING GOD'S HOUSE

Ezra i ; iii ; v ; vi.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

The chronology of this period needs careful study. Note the order of events :

Nebuchadnezzar's first conquest of Jerusalem—2 Chron. xxxvi. 6, 7.

Nebuchadnezzar's final defeat and destruction of Jerusalem (586 B.C.)—2 Chron. xxvi. 17-20.

Cyrus of Persia conquered Babylon (538 B.C.)—Dan. v. 30, 31.

Proclamation of Cyrus regarding the Jews and Jerusalem—Ezra i. 1, 2 (that is his first year as king of Babylon).

Work begun—Ezra iii. 1, 2 (the altar), 8-10 (the foundations), but little was accomplished before the death of Cyrus.

Cambyes succeeded his father Cyrus and is probably the king spoken of as Ahasuerus in Ezra iv. 6 ; and Artaxerxes in the next verse may also be the same man. The petition to him had the desired effect and the work was stopped, Ezra iv. 21.

Darius Hystaspes, the next king, allowed the work to proceed, Ezra vi. 1-12. Note the time taken to finish, Ezra iv. 24 and vi. 15.

Consider the reasons for the delay of the work. Lack of zeal is indicated in Hag. i. 2. Opposition of the people of the land hindered, Ezra iv. 1-5. These were the Samaritans, people of mixed descent, 2 Kings xvii. 24-28, and the returned captives were all of the Southern Kingdom. Judah and Benjamin, Ezra i. 5. Was it wise of the Jewish leaders to refuse the help of the Samaritans and so alienate them entirely? Note the reasons given why Jerusalem should not be built, Ezra iv. 11-16.

Consider the men who did the work—Sheshbazzar or Zerubbabel, the prince, who was made Governor of Jerusalem, Ezra i. 8; v. 14; Hag. i. 1; Joshua, son of the high priest, Ezra iii. 2; Hag. i. 1; the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, Ezra v. i; Hag. i. 1; Zech. i. 1. Consider what influence Daniel may have had with Cyrus in the matter of the proclamation. He lived on till the reign of Darius Hystaspes, Dan. xi. 1, and it is possible that he was still alive at the completion of the Temple.

Aim of this Lesson

To indicate the value of a place in which to worship God

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the fact that the Persians had conquered Babylon.

Leaving Babylon—Read very impressively Ezra i. 1-3. So Cyrus began his reign in Babylon by this act of clemency to the captive Jews. Imagine the stir and excitement there was among them as this message was carried over the country and think how they began to get ready to go home again. They had not been kept in prison in Babylon but were scattered over the country in colonies on farms and gardens where they could work and earn money, and many of them had become very rich. So now before they could go back to Jerusalem some had to sell property and other possessions which could not be taken with them, but some were so well off in Babylonia that they decided to stay there, at least till Jerusalem was built again and made comfortable to live in. What sort of men were they

who were most anxious to go? (Help the children to understand that they were the most religious and patriotic of the people.) Tell of the prince Sheshbazzar or Zerubbabel who was appointed by Cyrus as Governor of Judea and who naturally took charge of the arrangements for the return of the captives. Describe vividly how all the things which Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple were now given back to Zerubbabel (i. 7-11), and how the Jews who determined to stay behind added other things to these (i. 4-6). Daniel was amongst those who stayed—let the children suggest why—he loved God and his people as much as anyone, but very likely he felt he could best help them by staying in Babylon and advising the king—perhaps the king would not let so important a man go. Also he was now very old. Then picture the immense company which gathered with Zerubbabel (ii. 64-67), and imagine how they started on their long journey. They had to go back all the long thousand miles that their fathers had traversed as captives seventy years before. Think of some of the scenes and events of that journey.

Starting Work in Jerusalem—Describe the scene of desolation they found on reaching Jerusalem (2 Chron. xxxvi. 18-20). Since the time when Nebuchadnezzar had conquered the city in the days of Jeremiah everything had been destroyed—the Temple, the walls, the houses, were all in ruins, and the city was in a terrible state. Could this be called a happy home-coming? But they had come on purpose to build up some of the ruins, so quickly they started work. Their first thought was of their worship, so amongst the ruins of the Temple an altar was built. Tell of the priest who helped Zerubbabel to do this (iii. 2, 3), and picture them afterwards worshipping and sacrificing there. Apparently they then left the Temple for awhile to get some houses built for themselves and their families, and perhaps to cultivate some land; and they had to get some of the materials needed to rebuild the Temple (iii. 7). But it was not till the next year that they began the work of building this (iii. 8). Tell who were appointed to do it, and picture them laying the foundations. Describe the great meeting they held to praise God for His goodness (iii. 10-13).

Meeting Opposition—Of course all this attracted the attention of the people living round about. Explain who these were, Samaritans with a mixed ancestry. They worshipped God as did the Jews, but their worship was not so pure. And now they came wanting a share in this new Temple and offering to help build. But they had never been friendly with the Jews, and Zerubbabel suspected their motives and refused their help. This made them very angry and from that time they did all they could to hinder the work. Think of the various ways in which they would do this—making raids upon Jerusalem to steal or to break down at night what had been built by day—preventing them getting their materials into the city (iv. 4). And so the work went on very slowly, and was not nearly finished when the good king Cyrus died. Then the enemies got bolder and sent a petition to his son and successor (iv. 6). Read their letter, iv. 12–16. Tell how the king made enquiries, what he found out, and what he replied to them (iv. 17–22). So they had to stop right there with the Temple unfinished and very little else done in Jerusalem.

Building Again—But this king did not reign long and then a king named Darius came to the throne, and at once the Jews began to have hope again. Tell of the two prophets who now came forward to encourage the people (v. 1), and read some of Zechariah's words, Zech. viii. 1–5. Thus urged on, Zerubbabel began building again (v. 2). Tell of the altercation which followed with the Samaritans (v. 3, 4), and of the second letter which they sent, this time to King Darius (v. 6–17). Describe how Darius searched and what he found (vi. 1, 3), and read part of his reply, vi. 3, 6–12. Imagine the chagrin of the Samaritans and the joy of the Jews when this letter was received. And now that all hindrance was removed the work quickly went forward and very soon the Temple was entirely rebuilt and ready to use for worship (vi. 13, 14.) Is there any way in which we can imitate them and help to keep our place of worship tidy and in good repair?

LESSON 45

A LEADER WHO TRUSTED GOD

Ezra vii. 1-28 ; viii. 15-34 ; ix. 1-10.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

In studying the books of Ezra and Nehemiah we are considering the latest period of Old Testament history. Ezra represents a class, the scribes, who really had their origin at that time. The word is used earlier, see 2 Kings xii. 10, but seems to indicate a secretary, but from the time of the exile the scribes were the teachers of the law. Frequent reference is made to them in the New Testament where they are also sometimes called lawyers. It is probable that Ezra had a good deal to do with the compiling of some of the Old Testament books, especially Kings and Chronicles. Note his definite life purpose, vii. 10. His independent spirit is shewn in viii. 22. He had a profound veneration for the written law and managed to inspire the Jewish people with a veneration similar to his own. There can be no doubt that his work and example exercised immense influence over the subsequent development of Judaism. The immediate reason for his mission to Palestine was the desire to see the law more strictly observed among his countrymen. Subsidiary reasons were the beautifying of the Temple, vii. 19, 20, and the establishment of civil order, vii. 25. The religious decay at Jerusalem had thoroughly alarmed him, see ix. 5-15.

Aim of this Lesson

To help the children to appreciate the value of Bible study.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Recall the fact that when Zerubbabel led his party back to Jerusalem, a large number of the Jews stayed in the land of Babylonia.

Writing in Babylon—Fifty more years went by, and then

amongst those living in Babylon, was a good man called Ezra. His father was probably a priest and trained his boy well, teaching him a great deal about his people's religion and history. Ezra became very interested in all this and determined to learn all he could. Read vii. 10 noting especially the three words "seek. . . do. . . teach." Picture the young man at his studies and think how concerned he must have been to see so many of his fellow-countrymen becoming utterly careless about their religion. Tell also of his work as a scribe and consider with the children which books of the Old Testament he had all ready to study, and which he may have helped to write during those years in Babylon.

Preparing for a Journey—But like every other good Jew, Ezra had a great longing all the time to go to Jerusalem. He had heard how fifty years before the Temple had been rebuilt—do the children remember by whom?—and it was Ezra himself who wrote the story of this for us in the Bible (Ezra i-vi). And at last the time came when Ezra saw the opportunity of realising his heart's desire and going to Jerusalem. Tell how he laid his plans before the king, who at once gave him a letter authorising the journey. Give the gist of the letter to the class (vii. 11-26), and read Ezra's expression of thankfulness, vii. 27, 28. Just as Zerubbabel had done before him so Ezra now collected a large company to go with him. Tell who these were (vii. 7) and let the children notice the numbers of them given in viii. 1-14. Picture them answering Ezra's call to go to Jerusalem—getting ready to leave Babylonia—gathering near Babylon by the river Ahava where Ezra carefully made the list of all who were going. Tell of the lack of Levites who would be needed to help in the Temple services—how Ezra sent a deputation to the chief Levite at a town near by and how many then came to join the party (viii. 15-20). Then describe the special services that were held in camp by the river to pray for God's help and guidance (viii. 21-23). Especially point out Ezra's courage and independence in refusing the guard of soldiers. The precious things they had with them were then divided amongst the priests who were to take charge of them (viii. 24-30). And the great company set out (viii. 31).

Reaching Jerusalem—Picture the long journey, taking

four months (vii. 9), and think of the things that might happen to them on the way. Tell of the joy and excitement when they reached Jerusalem. But imagine, also, Ezra's sadness when he found out the state of the city and the people there (ix. 1). For many years they had no teachers or prophets to help them—they knew little about God and very few of them were really obeying His laws.

Praying—Describe how Ezra gathered together those in the city who really cared about God and His worship (ix. 4). Read part of his prayer, ix. 6–10. Then he set to work to help turn all the people back to God, and to teach them all about Him and His commandments. It was hard work for the people were very ignorant and there were few to help Ezra. That surely must have made him more eager than ever to write down all he could of their past history and of how God had helped them when they were truly following Him. For he saw that the people must be able to read all these stories and talk about them if they were to understand how God wanted them to live. And it is for that same reason that we to-day read and study our Bibles—the book which Ezra helped to write.

LESSON 46

PRAYING FOR THE CITY WITHOUT WALLS

Nehemiah i and ii

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

After the completion of Zerubbabel's Temple nearly seventy years elapsed and are passed over in silence in the Bible record except for the story, which formed last week's lesson, of how another party of exiles returned with Ezra to Jerusalem. The story of Nehemiah opens in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes Longimanus, ii. 1, the third Persian monarch after Darius Hystaspes. Find Shushan on the map—note its position, Dan. viii. 2, and the magnificence of

the palace, Est. i. 5-7. Consider Nehemiah's position and character. His office as cupbearer shows what confidence was placed in him—at a time when it was no uncommon thing to poison as unpopular king, the cupbearer held the king's life in his hands and must be a man above taking bribes. That he was a man of considerable wealth is indicated in v. 14-19. He was intensely patriotic, i. 4, and ii. 3, though up to this time he had probably never seen Jerusalem, and he was a man of faith and prayer. His brother Hanani, who now came from Jerusalem to see him, i. 2, must have gone there on some previous expedition, possibly with Ezra. Light is thrown on his character by vii. 2. Note the other characters in the lesson—Artaxerxes, ii. 1; Asaph the forest officer, ii. 8; Sanballat, Tobiah and Geshem in the territory west of the Euphrates, ii. 9, 10, 19. Consider the state of Jerusalem, i. 3; ii. 3, 13-15. Study Nehemiah's prayer noting his (1) confession, (2) remembrance of promises, (3) petition. The months Chisleu, i. 1, and Nisan, ii. 1, are four months apart in the Jewish calendar. Note on a plan of Jerusalem the parts of the city visited by Nehemiah, ii. 13-15.

Aim of this Lesson

To magnify prayer in the estimation of the children.

Story for the Class

Introduction—In the last two lessons we have heard about people who went back to Jerusalem from the land of captivity. Again to-day our story begins away in Babylonia.

Serving the King—And this time we must imagine ourselves in one of the palaces of the Persian king—not in Babylon itself but in Shushan. (Indicate its position on a small map held in the teacher's hand.) Describe the palace in detail (Est. i. 5-7), and if possible show a picture of a palace of those times. It was in that fine palace that one of these Jews lived, not as a prisoner but as an honoured servant of the king. Tell his name and describe his work. Picture him in attendance upon Artaxerxes—ready at any moment to be called into his presence—always present at any function where the king was—living in beautiful rooms of his

own which were adjoining the palace. Help the children to realize the responsibility of the position and let them suggest reasons why Nehemiah had been chosen for the office. Especially point out that though living in a country where other gods were worshipped he remained true to Jehovah.

Welcoming Hanani—One day Nehemiah was called out of his room to see a party of travellers who had arrived. Describe them as he saw them—dusty and travel stained, tired, arriving on camels evidently after a very long journey, Jews like himself. They were not at all the sort of people to be admitted to a palace, yet Nehemiah welcomed them cordially. Picture vividly the scene—the embracing, the weeping, the excitement, and the interest of the servants when they understood that the chief man of the party was the brother of their master Nehemiah! Let the children suggest the ways in which Nehemiah would show his pleasure and how he made his visitors comfortable—baths, clean clothes, food—and picture them sitting down to a meal in Nehemiah's beautiful room. Nehemiah knew that they had come from Jerusalem—had not his brother returned there with Ezra about twelve years ago?—so soon he asked them for news of the city. But they most likely suggested waiting till afterwards to tell this for they could not talk freely in the presence of Nehemiah's servants. But they had many things to tell about their journey—the same journey only the other way round that Zerubbabel and his party had taken nearly seventy years before, and that Ezra and his party had taken as we heard last week—think of some of the things that they would have to tell about it. Then imagine the scene when, the meal finished and the servants gone, Hanani poured out his tale of woe—describe Jerusalem to the class as Hanani described it to Nehemiah (i. 3). In spite of all Ezra's work things were still far from satisfactory, but it was impossible to get things put right inside the city till they had more protection, and the wall was still not rebuilt. Vividly picture Nehemiah's grief (i. 4). Evidently the suggestion then arose that Nehemiah should ask help from the king—in Jerusalem this had been talked over and all there felt that Nehemiah in his high position was the one who could help them at this time. It seems that Nehemiah was perfectly willing to lay the matter before the

king, but not until he had sought help from God. Briefly tell what he prayed and imagine him and his few friends from Jerusalem daily praying in this way for the next four months. Think what a long time it must have seemed and how discouraged they sometimes felt.

Petitioning the King—The thought of the distress in Jerusalem became an intolerable burden to Nehemiah, but at last the moment he had prayed for came. Vividly picture the scene as Nehemiah was waiting upon the king, when the monarch suddenly commented upon his sad looks. Read their conversation, ii. 2-5, noting especially Nehemiah's quick silent prayer. What an anxious moment must have followed—would the king be angry or sympathetic? Tell the result (ii. 6). What a load was lifted from Nehemiah's mind! Tell of the letters of introduction that were asked for and given (ii. 7, 8) and how without any delay Nehemiah, and probably Hanani, sent out for Jerusalem with the king's escort (ii. 9).

Investigating Jerusalem—Picture the party traversing again the long road round the edge of the desert and tell of the hostility of the Samaritan governors when they heard of it (ii. 10). But, nothing daunted, Nehemiah reached Jerusalem. Imagine his feelings as he entered the ruined city and for three days mingled with the people learning the details of their misery. He was secretly making his plans those days and there were some investigations he felt he must make privately. Describe how he set about this and what he found (ii. 13-15). This experience satisfied him that the first thing to do was to rebuild the wall of the city, so he immediately called upon the Jewish leaders to come forward and help in this undertaking (ii. 17, 18). This called forth fresh opposition from the neighbouring governors (ii. 19), but the man who had prayed for four months that God would send him to the help of Jerusalem was not easily turned from his purpose, and he believed now that God would help him to get the work done. Read his reply to his adversaries, ii. 20.

LESSON 47

HOW THE WALLS WERE BUILT

Neh. iii ; iv. 1-16 ; vi.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

With a map of Jerusalem read Neh. iii. noting the complete circuit of the city and the different sections assigned to the various companies. A priest or householder or head of a family was in charge of each company so that responsibility and friendly rivalry might hasten the work. Not all were equally enthusiastic, iii, 5, and there was a faction in the city distinctly hostile to Nehemiah, vi. 10-13, 17-19. Opposition from Samaria hindered the work considerably. Sanballat first ridiculed, iv. 1-3, then threatened, iv. 7, 8. Four times he tried to entice Nehemiah out of the city with evident intention to assassinate him, but Nehemiah was too wary, vi. 4. He threatened to accuse him of treason to Artaxerxes, vi. 5, 6.

"We are unable to find a single fault in Nehemiah to counterbalance his virtues. For pure and disinterested patriotism he stands unrivalled. The man whom the account of the misery and ruin of his native country, and the perils with which his countrymen were beset, prompted to leave his splendid banishment, and a post of wealth, power and influence in the first court of the world that he might share those sorrows and perils is a patriot indeed. Every act of his during his government was utterly unselfish. All he did was noble, generous, high-minded, courageous, and to the highest degree upright. As a statesman he combined forethought, prudence and sagacity in counsel with vigour, promptitude and decision in action. In dealing with the enemies of his country he was wary, penetrating and bold. In directing the internal economy of the state, he took a comprehensive view of the real welfare of the people and adopted the measures best calculated to promote it. In dealing whether with friend or foe, he was utterly free from favour or fear, conspicuous for the simplicity with which he aimed only at doing what was

right without respect of persons. But in nothing was he more remarkable than for his piety and the singleness of eye with which he walked before God. He seems to have undertaken everything in dependence upon God, with prayer for His blessing and guidance, and to have sought his reward only from God " (J. Parker).

Aim of this Lesson

To draw out the admiration of the children for Nehemiah.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Let the children recall from last week's lesson Nehemiah's decision to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem.

Setting to Work—(The teacher should draw a small plan of Jerusalem to show to the children while describing how Nehemiah divided up the people appointing sections of the wall to different groups.) Enumerate some of these groups—the high priest took charge of the building of the sheep gate (iii. 1)—the ruler of half Jerusalem took one section (iii. 9)—some priests came from the plains (iii. 22), and the city priests had their appointed portion (iii. 28). Some were selfish and not very willing to work (iii. 5), but Nehemiah succeeded in getting most to take their share. Imagine them discussing the work—each man in charge of a section appointing different jobs to those working with him and the groups perhaps challenging each other as to who would get done first. Picture the work beginning—rubbish to be cleared away—foundations prepared—stones collected from among the ruins or brought from outside. How excited all the people must have been.

Watching and Building—Of course news of all this soon reached Sanballat, his enemy away in Samaria—Tobiah happened to be with him at the time—read what they said about it, iv. 2, 3, and tell how Nehemiah prayed about it when he heard of their anger (iv. 4, 5.) The only effect of Tobiah's taunt on the people was apparently to make them more determined than ever, and very soon they had the wall half way up all round the city (iv. 6). Then, through some Jews who lived outside the city (iv. 12), news reached them

that Sanballat and Tobiah were gathering an army to come and fight them (iv. 7, 8). Imagine the terror this spread in the city. Again Nehemiah's first thought was prayer but he knew they must be ready to fight as well. So the building had to stop while all the men in the city got ready to defend their homes (iv. 9, 10). Read what Nehemiah said to them, iv. 14. But the enemies never came! They had intended to surprise the city by a night attack and that being now impossible they gave up the idea (iv. 11, 15). Finding that no army came Nehemiah started building again, but he also kept up his preparations for war. Describe these (iv. 16-18). But the people were spread out along the wall all round the city and in no one place were they strong enough to repulse an attack from outside. So as Nehemiah went from place to place inspecting the work and encouraging the workers he took with him a trumpeter. Read what he told the people to do in case of attack, iv. 19, 20, and what he said to those living outside the city, iv. 22. Picture the progress of the work under these difficult circumstances (iv. 21, 23).

Finishing the Wall—Thus the whole wall was finished and the gate-ways built up ready for the gates (vi. 1), when a message came from Sanballat. Tell what it was (vi. 2) and how Nehemiah at once suspected that this was a trap. Read his reply, vi. 3. But three more similar messages came (vi. 4), and then, as Nehemiah was not to be caught that way, Sanballat sent his servant the fifth time with a letter (vi. 5). Read this letter and Nehemiah's reply, vi. 6-8. Then tell of the further plot against Nehemiah (vi. 10-13), how Sanballat had friends even inside Jerusalem and they tried to entice Nehemiah into the Temple alone so that he would be in their power, pretending that it was for his safety. Read his indignant reply to them, vi. 11. And so, in spite of all obstacles and hindrances, Nehemiah carried his great work to completion—the gates were put up and everything finished in 52 days (vi. 15). Let the children enumerate the good traits which have struck them in Nehemiah's Character.

LESSON 48

READING THE LAW TO THE PEOPLE

Nehemiah viii

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

Nehemiah had completed the walls of the city, but he was not content with the safety of the city merely, he realised the necessity of a strict observance of the religious law if the nation was to be re-established. After taking a thorough census of the population, chapter vii, he called a large assembly for the reading of the law, chapter viii. Compare this with Josiah's reading of the law (see lesson 38). Then the book was apparently read through on one occasion, but here it took seven days, viii. 18, so evidently very much more was read this time. Note that this meeting took place when Nehemiah had been only six months in Jerusalem, viii. 2, so he lost no time in getting reforms started. viii. 4 is the only case of the word pulpit being used in the Bible. Study the feast of Tabernacles, Lev. xxiii. 39-43, and its observance on this occasion. Consider the part taken by Ezra in this. He "was a devout and zealous ecclesiastic, of passionate temperament, strong religious faith and rigid principles, who, though he met with temporary failure, in the end permanently influenced the thoughts and habits of his countrymen. He belonged to the class of literary men who, being acquainted with the art of writing, had, in the time when the nation was independent, furnished its statesmen with their secretaries (2 Sam. viii. 17; 1 Kings iv. 3; 2 Kings xviii. 18), but now that its political life had ceased, were students of the Law, which they copied, and interpreted. . . . The book of Nehemiah carries the history of the Jewish people down to a later date than any other of the avowedly historical works in the canon of the Old Testament. Its interest is manifold since it describes not only the rebuilding of the walls of Jerusalem, but the reconstruction of the Jewish ecclesiastical organisation; and as an authority for the events, it relates is first rate. . . . And its value is augmented

by its vivid portrayal of the noble character of Nehemiah himself. His career presents an exceptional combination of strong self-reliance with humble trust in God, of penetrating shrewdness with perfect simplicity of purpose, of persistent prayerfulness with the most energetic activity; and for religious faith and practical sagacity he stands conspicuous among the illustrious personages of the Bible " (Dummelow).

Aim of this Lesson

To again emphasize the value of Bible reading.

Story for the Class

Introduction—How many days had it taken Nehemiah to get the walls of Jerusalem built? There were many other things to do in the city then and three or four months went by full of work.

The Call to Worship—The city was now well defended and the people could give their attention to their business, or building houses, or planting gardens, or anything else they wanted to do. But Nehemiah knew that if they were to be really strong and prosperous something else was needed—they must learn about God and worship Him. Perhaps he had in mind, the story we heard some weeks ago of how King Josiah called the people together to listen to the Law being read (do the children remember?). Very many years had gone by since then, but now Nehemiah did just what King Josiah had done then—he called the people to come and hear God's book read. Perhaps no man in all the city rejoiced more over this than the scribe Ezra about whom we heard three weeks ago. Josiah had called the people to the Temple, but for some reason Nehemiah thought one of the streets a better place—perhaps there was more room there. Vividly picture the assembling of the people, both men and women (viii. 3), inside one of the city gates (viii. 1), while Nehemiah prepared for the ceremony by having a large wooden pulpit built in the street so that the reader could stand there and be seen and heard by everyone.

The Opening of the Book—Imagine the hush that fell over the assembly when the appointed time arrived and the leading

men of the nation appeared before them. Describe the fourteen dignified and godly men who went up into the pulpit (viii. 4.). The middle man in the row was Ezra, who had for so long been trying to get the people to pay more heed to God's law—how he must have rejoiced that Nehemiah had called this great meeting. Solemnly, in the sight of all the people, he opened the precious book—describe the scene of enthusiasm which followed (viii. 5, 6).

The Reading of the Law—Ezra began clearly to read the sacred writing, stopping now and then to explain a difficult passage, or to let one of the others do so (viii. 7, 8). As they listened the people realised how far short they had come of their law's requirements and weeping could be heard all over the assembly. Then Nehemiah came and stood with Ezra and spoke to the people to calm them—read that he said, viii. 9, 10. Picture the Levites stilling the company, and then their joyful dispersal (viii. 11, 12).

Keeping the Feast—Next day Ezra called together not all the company, but the leaders and fathers, and went on with the reading (viii. 13). And now they came to the command about one of the feasts—let the children read what they read, Lev. xxiii. 39–41. At once they said, "Let us keep this feast now!" Vividly describe the excitement which followed as everybody hastened to obey (viii. 15–17)—the different kinds of branches they brought—the places where they erected their leafy tents. Think how the children enjoyed this part of the ceremony! But they did not forget that the real reason why Nehemiah had called them together was that they might read their Bible, so every day they gathered again in front of the big pulpit to listen to some more reading and explanation, and every day they determined again to obey what they heard. For eight days this great meeting lasted, and then they finished with a very solemn service in which they again promised to read and obey God's law. Thus was finished the great work of Ezra and Nehemiah, and as long as the people kept their promise to read and obey God's law, happiness and prosperity were their lot. How are we acting towards God's book?

SOME OF OUR LORD'S PARABLES

Aim

To conclude the course by summing up the teaching given therein with some of our Lord's most striking parables.

LESSON 49

THE PRODIGAL SON

Luke xv. 11-32

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"The story of the Prodigal Son is probably the best known story in the Bible. It has been told in forms to fit the 'local colour' of many nations, because its appeal lies not in any custom of Eastern life, but in those great relationships and emotions which are universal. Consider the immediate occasion which called it forth—'The Pharisees. . . murmured' (xv. 2). To them the message that went home most keenly was doubtless that of the elder brother. . . The right of choice is conceded from the first. The (younger) son is not denied the right to depart. There was no essential wrong in the departure; his *use* of his patrimony was the test of his motive. In this case the impulse to return must be from the son; the father is ready to welcome but does not journey to the far land to seek. Consider the story as a record of an event possibly true in all its details, and known to Christ: true certainly in type to many experiences of that day. The 'far land' of Rome, or Corinth, or Alexandria doubtless attracted many a Jewish youth, and then swamped him in the depths of its own iniquity. The one activity of the youth was *spending*, a very significant description. Search other New Testament references to famines; consider their cause—

difficulty of food distribution, etc. The swine-owner would, of course, be a pagan; in his last office the prodigal parted with the last shred which might still have given him a claim on the Jew. The father's daily watching and quick recognition are among the most beautiful touches in the story. No parable has been subject to more diverse application than this. Consider why. Consider also our common application of it *directly*—that is, in circumstances exactly similar to the story. But let us recognise that there is many a *prosperous* prodigal, and that spiritual treasures may be spent while outer success is on the increase. The spirit that is insensitive to the claim and presence of God through all the days is in truest sense the prodigal" (Huntley).

"This parable like the two preceding is intended to show what joy there is in heaven at the conversion of sinners, and, therefore, how wrong the Pharisees were to murmur because Christ consorted with sinners to convert them. . . The conclusion of the parable graphically traces the character of the elder brother, who represents the Pharisees and persons of their spirit. He is busied in the field (xv. 25), i.e., in a round of regular, but loveless, religious observances. He shows anger and jealousy, and that in spite of the affectionate entreaties of his father, who invites him to the festivities, and shows him equal honour and love (xv. 28). He shows himself, like the Pharisees, quite unconscious of his own failings, and arrogantly boasts, 'I have never transgressed a commandment of thine' (xv. 29). He puts the worst construction on his brother's past sins, perhaps exaggerating them (xv. 30), and shows himself incapable of forgiveness" (Dummelow). The self-will of the elder brother was not different in kind from that of the younger though it worked out in a different way—he never came back from the far country of bitterness.

Aim of this Lesson

To illustrate God's willingness to forgive.

Story for the Class

Introduction—For ever so many weeks we have been hearing stories from the Old Testament—now we are to have

some from the New Testament again—some stories which Jesus told. First let us see to whom He told this story. Read xv. 1, 2 and note the four kinds of people there. Let us think as we listen to the story just what each of these different kinds of people would learn from it.

The Happy Family—Vividly portray to the children the people and circumstances of this family—parents, two boys, many servants, large and well furnished house, extensive estate. The father was a sort of zemindar. Imagine the life of the boys as they grew up—how they were regarded by the servants and neighbours—how as they became old enough they took an interest in their father's affairs—then began to share in the work and responsibility.

The Bereaved Family—Trace the growing discontent of the younger boy—to what was this due? May be to bad and unworthy friends who suggested that he could have a much better time if he were free from all home restraints. Liken this influence to anything in your village or district which is having a similar effect. At last the boy made up his mind to go. Tell what he asked for and imagine his father's and mother's entreaties. Evidently they had been in the habit of letting him have his own way, and now also they had to yield. Picture the departure—did he trouble to take luggage with him, or with plenty of money in his pocket did he say he would get all he needed new in the big town he was going to? Do not at this point follow the boy's fortunes further, but picture the family without him as the days went by. Tell how the father was constantly looking away in the direction the boy had gone and everyone knew he was longing for his return. Imagine how the elder brother would say, "Why worry about him? It is ever so much better now he has gone and we have no more of his grumbling and discontent. He is a silly fellow but has got what he chose and we can well get on without him." Everybody said, "What a comfort it must be to the old people to have such a steady, hard-working son left at home." But was he a comfort to them? He was not a bit sorry his brother was gone and never could see why his parents were so heart-broken over the loss. And so really the father lost both his boys, for though one was present in body his spirit was quite away and did not

sympathise one bit. And so the months went by. Which boy made the father most unhappy?

The Absent Boy—But what was the absent boy doing all these months? Briefly describe his gay life away from all restraints in company with his chosen friends. Everyone who saw him said, "What a fortunate youth to have plenty of money and to be able to do just as he likes." Imagine how as time went by money was not so plentiful—he had bought anything he fancied and never thought of the future—picture the steady decline of his popularity as money became more and more scarce. Tell of his search for work and how at last he was only too thankful to undertake what to anyone of his nation was the most degrading job possible. Tell of his resolve.

The Reunited Family—Still every day the father kept watching and hoping that some day he might see the boy coming back. Vividly describe how one day he saw someone—too far away to recognise at first—but he watched till he was sure, then ran to meet him. Picture the meeting and the boy's condition. Help the children to feel the welcome. Read what the boy said, xv. 21, and the orders given to the servants, xv. 22–24. Describe the scene of joy and excitement and welcome in the home. Did the father think, "How glad his brother will be when he comes in from his business!" Graphically depict his behaviour when he did come (xv. 25–28). Which of those greetings did the boy really deserve? Of course he did not deserve his father's welcome at all, but the old man loved him so much that he forgave the boy's sin. Read the conversation between father and elder son, xv. 29–32. Was this boy right? Show that just as he had had no sympathy with his father's sorrow, so now he had no share in his joy. What a mean-spirited man he must have been! Point out that the father's forgiveness was shown in his treatment of each of the boys, but most of all perhaps towards the elder, for the younger said, "I have sinned"—the elder said, "I have not sinned." I do not think we want to be like either of those boys do we? But Jesus said that the father was like God.

LESSON 50

THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Luke x. 25-37.

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

See on the map the route from Jerusalem to Jericho, and the nature of the road—16 miles, wild, rocky, steep. Consider the people in the story. The priests and Levites were of the same tribe. They had no land inheritance in Israel Num. xviii. 21; their work was connected with the Tabernacle, Num. i. 50, 53; with the Temple, 1 Chron. xxiii. 27, 28; with the Book of the Law, Deut. xxxi. 25, 26. Thus they became the scribes or teachers, 2 Chron. xxxv. 3, and continued till our Lord's time. The priests were of the same tribe whose duties were connected with the Temple worship. These were the people from whom the wounded man would have every reason to expect help—it is a mistake to liken them to Brahmin priests—had our Lord told the story in India to-day He would probably have said the Christian pastor and the Mission teacher. The Samaritan was the one from whom no help would be expected, John iv. 9.

“The lawyer intended to justify himself by showing that, even upon a liberal interpretation of the word ‘neighbour,’ he had done his duty. He expected Christ to say that a neighbour was a friend or at least an Israelite. The idea that a ‘neighbour’ was a foreigner had never occurred to him. . . . If Christ had said ‘a heathen is thy neighbour,’ the man would have argued the point with learned subtlety. Instead of this Jesus told him a story in which a man treated a foreigner as a neighbour, and the lawyer was bound to confess that this was in accordance with the mind of God” (Dummelow).

“Study the nature of a parable. Note the two classes of parables: (a) those whose message lies only in the great spiritual truths symbolised in the earthly story (Matt. xiii. etc.); (b) those that are stories of human life with a direct, as well as a secondary, message. The ‘Good

'Samaritan' belongs to these. It is rather an 'illustration' than a 'parable,' and possibly is the story of a real event which had come under Christ's notice. . . . It is important to study the two-fold summary of the entire law given by the lawyer. Note that the clauses are separate quotations from Deuteronomy and Leviticus; also note that Christ Himself used the same summary (Matt. xxii. 35, etc.), There was nothing wrong with the lawyer's knowledge, but much lacking in the degree of his realisation. He asked for limitation to his duty; Christ rubbed out all bounds, and made duty as wide as need. Study Christ's method in dealing with the question. Note how the man was drawn out to the point of a definite problem. Consider how much more effective the story was than a dissertation" (Huntley),

Aim of this Lesson

To encourage emulation of the Samaritan.

Story for the Class

Introduction—How often do you ask questions about things? How do people answer your questions? Are there some people who do not try to answer them but only laugh at them? All sorts of people used to ask questions of Jesus, and He always answered, sometimes by a story. The story we are to hear to-day was in answer to a question. Let the children read x. 25-29. Who asked the question? How would you answer it? Here is Jesus' answer.

The Start—The man He told about was going from Jerusalem down the ghat road to Jericho. Now Jericho being a great market town there is reason to suppose that this man was a merchant going to do business there. Picture him leaving his home in Jerusalem—well dressed—carrying a considerable sum of money, possibly, safely hidden on his person. Describe how he passed the city gate—descended the Kedron Valley—climbed Olivet and was on the main road to Jericho. Soon Bethany was passed—the way became more and more lonely—wild, rocky scenery—the road descending rapidly—hot sun—no shade. Possibly Jericho

was already in view though he had some hours more walking to get there.

The Attack—Picture a still more wild and lonely bit of road and vividly describe how a band of robbers sprang out from among the rocks and attacked the traveller. Imagine his actions, his words—did he fight or plead for mercy or try to run away? But what could one man do against many? Graphically tell how they left him.

The Priest—Think of the man's feelings as he was left stripped and helpless on the hot dusty road—how he longed for some one to come and help him. At last someone appeared—imagine his hopes amounting to certainty of succour as he recognised a priest (pastor)—the most likely man in all the nation to help. Very vividly picture what happened—what the wounded man must have said—what he felt when left alone.

The Levite—Describe over again his feelings—fears—hopes. Picture the arrival of the Levite (teacher) and the fresh hopes raised—what this man did—the depth of despair of the poor merchant. If neither of these two men would help then indeed his case was hopeless—he must die alone at the roadside.

The Samaritan—Again came sounds of footsteps—an animal this time so evidently some rich man was coming—certainly he would not stop, for if there were robbers about he might be the next victim. Had the wounded man been able to look up as the rider approached he would have seen that not only was he rich, but he was a Samaritan—let the children recall why that would extinguish the flicker of hope in his heart. Then very fully describe what happened, drawing out the children's admiration for the unselfish kindness of the Samaritan. Is there anyone we can help, someone younger or weaker than ourselves perhaps, but to whom we can show the same spirit of helpfulness that the Samaritan did?

LESSON 51

THE GREAT INVITATION

Luke xiv. 15-24

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

"The real application of this parable—the rejection of the first invited guests, the Jews—is far beyond the grasp of a child. But the story is full of elements which have a direct appeal to him and which will help him to appreciate another aspect of the loving-kindness of Jesus.

"Teachers should study first the real setting and message of the parable. It was spoken at a Sabbath-day feast in the house of a chief Pharisee. This is the third such feast recorded by St. Luke as attended by our Lord as a guest, vii. 36-50, xi. 37, etc. xiv. 1.

"Each feast became a scene of solemn and significant teaching. Consider how social standards and customs may reveal spiritual ideals. On this third occasion Christ likened His own coming to a feast prepared and His rejection by the rulers to their self-exclusion from all that had been the nation's hope. Search other references in St. Luke to feasts and their customs.

"A rapid survey of the Gospel will show how many times over the rulers met the invitation of the Gospel by criticism and virtual refusal, v. 21, 30, vi. 11, vii. 30, vii. 39, xi. 15, etc.

"The first and second invitations. The first was preliminary, and often a long interval elapsed before the second (sudden) call.

"The excuses. Note that certain reasons for exemption from military duty were allowed, Deut. xx. 5-7. All showed that the feast was despised in comparison with the calls of everyday life.

"The near presence of the hungry poor. These would surround gates and open doorways at every feast, cf. Dives and Lazarus, xvi. 19.

"Read and compare the parable of Matt. xxii. 1-13. The teaching is the same" (Huntley).

Aim of this Lesson

To show that God wants everybody.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Did you ever receive an invitation to go anywhere?—to stay at a friend's house?—or to take a meal there?—or to go to some big feast? Let the children talk about how such invitations are sent—how they are received.

Invitations—Another story Jesus told was about invitations. There was once a very rich man who was very good and kind. He lived in a house like a palace with beautiful gardens and many servants. One day he determined to have a big feast to which he could invite all his friends. So the first thing he did was to send word to all those friends telling them what he was going to do and inviting them to come. The day was not fixed yet but he said it would not be long before he was ready. Suppose you had been one of those friends what would you have done?

Preparations—Imagine what preparations the rich man would make for his feast. Think of the food he would buy—let the children suggest what things they would most like. Describe the decorations and the new clothes and anything else that he or his household would think of. Liken to any similar feast given in your town or district. Tell of the excitement of all living in the house—the joy of the rich man himself.

Excuses—At last all was ready and one of the servants was sent to call the guests. How pleased they would be to know that the time had come! But, to the servant's surprise, no one seemed anxious to come, all went on with their work just as if he had never spoken. Read what three of them said, xiv. 18-20. Not only did those three speak so, but everyone to whom the servant came said the same sort of thing. Imagine his chagrin as he returned to his master—how would he tell him the response of his friends? Imagine the scene as he made his report and the disappointment and sorrow and shame of the great man.

New Invitations—Soon the master decided what to do—read xiv. 21, and picture the servant quickly obeying. Imagine what people he would meet. Let the children suggest. To each he gave his master's invitation. How did these people respond to it? Perhaps some laughed and thought it was just a joke, but the servant said his master meant it. Some thought it was a mistake. What would you have thought? But when they understood that they really were invited how gladly they accepted. Help the children to visualise that assembly of poor, maimed, halt and blind. Again the servant came to report to his master. Read xiv. 22, 23 and picture the servant going out a third time. What excitement there must have been in the big house by now—most of the guests had never even imagined themselves in such surroundings. Describe what they saw and the sort of things they said about the house and its furniture and decorations. And still more and more kept coming in. Think how they greeted each other.

The Feast—But especially tell of the welcome of the host—now he was satisfied when he saw that so many respected and accepted his invitation. Picture his geniality making all feel happy and at ease. And when at last there were enough people to fill the great banquet hall, the company was taken in there to the feast. Let the children suggest what there was to eat, and think how all enjoyed themselves—never had they had so much or so rich food before.

When Jesus told that story He said that was like the kingdom of God, and of course that means that all sorts of people are invited into that kingdom. *We* are invited—which of the people in the story are we going to be like?

LESSON 52

THE SOWER

Luke viii. 4-15

For the Teacher's Private Study and the Preparation Class

There should be many classes in which, if the work of the year has been well done, the present lesson might lead to a



THE SOWER

definite appeal for decision on the part of the pupils. This, followed by a short period of silent prayer, should be very helpful to many of the young people.

"Study the *period* to which the parable belongs. The great group in Matt. xiii, partly repeated in Mark iv and Luke viii, seems to epitomise the chief aspects of Kingdom—truth which Christ taught during His Galilean ministry. Teachers may search for the other two groups of parables—those belonging to the period between the Transfiguration, and those of the last week" (Huntley).

The emphasis in this parable is on the ground which here typifies men's hearts, and all who hear the Gospel may be classified in one or other of the four groups. Note how well the condition of the ground in each case illustrates a particular state of the human heart.

"St. Matthew and St. Mark both agree that Jesus did not begin to teach regularly in parables until opposition to His teaching had developed, and the people under the influence of the Pharisees and scribes had begun to harden themselves against His influence, and to criticise His doctrine (Matt. xiii. 10-16, Mark iv. 11, 12, Luke viii. 10). One purpose of His parabolic teaching was to conceal His doctrine from the unfit as a punishment for their wilful blindness and spiritual unreceptiveness. But the parables also served to reveal the truth in suggestive and stimulating forms to the fit. They arrested the attention, remained in the memory, and could not fail in a reflective and devout mind to unfold gradually somewhat of their meaning. They acted as a test, they repelled those who were unreceptive and lacking in industry and earnestness, but they attracted the earnest disciples who knew that precious treasure was concealed beneath the surface, and were willing to dig deep until they found it" (Dummelow).

Aim of this Lesson

To lead the children to decision.

Story for the Class

Introduction—Once more this year we are to have a story which Jesus told. This one was told away in Galilee where

Jesus was sitting in a boat on the lake, with a crowd on the shore listening. And while He talked they could see on the hill side the ploughed fields, and in one of the fields a man was sowing seed. So Jesus told a story about a sower.

The Man's Field—Picture a well-ploughed field all ready for the seed. How often have the children seen such a one? Was there a footpath across it, or along one side? There was a path beside the field Jesus described, and there was also something else that people could not see so easily. There was a stony patch in one corner. The rocks and stones did not show above ground but they were only just hidden by the thinnest layer of soil. And next to this field there was evidently a bit of jungle, because at that side of the land seeds of thorny jungle plants had fallen into the ground. Of course no one could see these, and all the field looked quite ready for the farmer's seed. So he sowed his seed. How many of the children have ever watched a farmer doing so?

The Crop—Describe vividly the growth of the seed. Just a little had blown away on to the footpath—read what became of that, viii. 5. Let the children suggest what would be likely to happen where there were stones underneath—then read viii. 6. Picture what happened in the thorny ground—good seed and jungle seed all growing together—what did the farmer say when he saw it?—which kind grew the quicker?—would the good seed ripen with so many other plants in amongst it? Read viii. 7. But of course most of the ground was good and clean—read what happened there, viii. 8.

The Question—Picture everybody going away talking about this story—"What did He mean?" they were saying. But the disciples brought their question to Jesus Himself and asked Him to explain His story.

The Explanation—So He told them that by the ground He meant people, and the seed was all the things about God and Heaven and right living that He had been saying. The things He had been saying were all good like the farmer's seed—when the seed did not grow it was because of bad ground, so when people did not do right it was they who were bad, not His teaching. But there were four different

kinds of ground in the story, so, He said, there are four different kinds of people. What are they? Describe in detail. (1) The wayside is hard, like the people who hear about Jesus but say they do not love Him nor want to please Him. Surely none of us are like that? (2) In the stony ground the seed began to grow and then died, so that ground is like people who listen to Bible stories and preaching and say it is all very good, but they go away and live just as they did before—they are tempted to do wrong things and without stopping to think about pleasing Jesus they commit the same old sins, and soon the desire to do right dies like the plants in the story. (3) The other bit of bad ground had good and bad things together in it—that is like people who are trying to please Jesus and do right, and trying to be selfish and please themselves too. "Other things" (viii. 14), may be quite right things—our examinations perhaps, or earning money—but if we think only of these they may fill our lives and leave no room for Jesus. (4) Read viii. 15. Which do we belong to? Lead the children each to face the question for themselves. The bad ground may become good ground by having the bad things taken out—so Jesus can take the bad things out of us and help us to be good. Shall we ask Him to do so?

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